

SOCIETY HILL AT UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS I *** COMMUNITY UPDATE ***

Home Maintenance Schedule Regular Maintenance is the Key

Inspecting your home on a regular basis and following good maintenance practices are the best way to protect your investment in your home. Whether you take care of a few tasks at a time or several all at once, it is important to get into the habit of doing them. Establish a routine for yourself, and you will find the work is easy to accomplish and not very time-consuming. A regular schedule of seasonal maintenance can put a stop to the most common — and costly — problems, before they occur. If necessary, use a camera to take pictures of anything you might want to share with an expert for advice or to monitor or remind you of a situation later.

Here are some suggestions for protecting your investment and how to help keep your home a safe and healthy place to live.

If you do not feel comfortable performing some of the home maintenance tasks listed below, or do not have the necessary equipment, for example a ladder, you may want to consider hiring a “qualified and insured” individual (such as a contractor or handyperson) to help you.

Seasonal Home Maintenance

Most home maintenance activities are seasonal. Fall is the time to get your home ready for the coming winter, which can be the most grueling season for your home. During winter months, it is important to follow routine maintenance procedures, by checking your home carefully for any problems that may arise and taking corrective action as soon as possible. Spring is the time to assess winter damage, start repairs and prepare for warmer months. Over the summer, there are a number of indoor and outdoor maintenance tasks to look after, such as repairing walkways and steps, painting and checking your chimney and roof.

While most maintenance is seasonal, there are some things you should do on a frequent basis year-round:

- Make sure air vents indoors and outdoors (intake, exhaust and forced air) are not blocked by snow or debris.
- Check and clean range hood filters on a monthly basis.

- Test ground fault circuit interrupter(s) on electrical outlets monthly by pushing the test button, which should then cause the reset button to pop up.
- If there are young children in the house, make sure electrical outlets are equipped with safety plugs.
- Regularly check the house for safety hazards, such as a loose handrail, lifting or buckling flooring, inoperative smoke detectors, and so on.

The maintenance schedule presented here is a general guide for you to follow. The actual timing is left for you to decide, and you may want to further divide the list of items for each season into months.

Fall

- Have furnace or heating system serviced by a qualified service company every two years for a gas furnace, and every year for an oil furnace, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- If you have central air conditioning, make sure the drain pan under the cooling coil mounted in the furnace plenum is draining properly and is clean.
- Lubricate circulating pump on hot water heating system.
- Disconnect the power to the furnace and examine the forced-air furnace fan belt, if installed, for wear, looseness or noise; clean fan blades of any dirt buildup.
- Check chimneys for obstructions such as nests.
- Remove the grilles on forced-air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.
- Turn ON gas furnace pilot light (if your furnace has one), set the thermostat to “heat” and test the furnace for proper operation by raising the thermostat setting until the furnace starts to operate. Once you have confirmed proper operation, return the thermostat to the desired setting.
- Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- Check to see that the ductwork leading to and from the heat recovery ventilator is in good shape, the joints are tightly sealed (aluminum tape or mastic) and any duct insulation and plastic duct wrap is free of tears and holes.
- Check to see that bathroom exhaust fans and range hoods are operating properly.
- Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms, and replace batteries.
- Clean portable humidifier, if one is used.
- Replace window screens with storm windows.
- Remove interior insect screens from windows to allow air from the heating system

to keep condensation off window glass and to allow more free solar energy into your home.

- Ensure windows and skylights close tightly; repair or replace weather-stripping, as needed.
- Ensure all doors to the outside shut tightly, and check other doors for ease of use. Replace door weather-stripping if required.
- Cover outside of air-conditioning units and shut off power.
- Winterize landscaping, for example, prepare gardens and, if necessary, protect bushes for winter.

Winter

- Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- After consulting your hot water tank owner's manual, drain off a dishpan full of water from the clean-out valve at the bottom of your hot water tank to control sediment and maintain efficiency.
- Clean humidifier two or three times during the winter season.
- Vacuum bathroom fan grille.
- Vacuum fire and smoke detectors, as dust or spider webs can prevent them from functioning.
- Check pressure gauge on all fire extinguishers; recharge or replace if necessary.
- Check fire escape routes, door and window locks and hardware, and lighting around outside of house; ensure family has good security habits.
- Monitor your home for excessive moisture levels — for example, condensation on your windows, which can cause significant damage over time and pose serious health problems — and take corrective action if necessary.
- Check all faucets for signs of dripping and change washers as needed. Faucets requiring frequent replacement of washers may be in need of repair.
- If you have a plumbing fixture that is not used frequently, such as a laundry tub or spare bathroom sink, tub or shower stall, run some water briefly to keep water in the trap.
- Clean drains in dishwasher, sinks, bathtubs and shower stalls.
- Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing.
- Examine windows and doors for ice accumulation or cold air leaks. If found, make a note to repair or replace in the spring.

- Examine attic for frost accumulation.
- Check electrical cords, plugs and outlets for all indoor and outdoor seasonal lights to ensure fire safety; if worn, or if plugs or cords feel warm to the touch, replace immediately.

Spring

- After consulting your hot water tank owner's manual, carefully test the temperature and pressure relief valve to ensure it is not stuck. **Caution:** This test may release hot water that can cause burns.
- Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- Have fireplace or wood stove and chimney cleaned and serviced as needed.
- Shut down, drain and clean furnace humidifier, and close the furnace humidifier damper on units with central air conditioning.
- Switch on power to air conditioning and check system. Have it serviced every two or three years.
- Clean or replace air-conditioning filter, if applicable.
- Check dehumidifier and drain — clean if necessary.
- Turn OFF gas furnace and fireplace pilot lights where possible.
- Check dishwasher and washing machine water hoses for leaks and tears.
- Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms, and replace batteries.
- Undertake spring planting maintenance, if necessary.

Summer

- Clean or replace air-conditioning filter, and clean or replace ventilation system filters if necessary.
- If you have a plumbing fixture that is not used frequently, for example, a laundry tub or spare bathroom sink, tub or shower stall, run some water briefly to keep water in the trap.
- Deep clean carpets and rugs.
- Vacuum bathroom fan grille.
- Disconnect the duct connected to your clothes dryer, and vacuum lint from duct, the areas surrounding your dryer and your dryer's vent hood outside.

- Check security of all guardrails and handrails.
- Check smooth functioning of all windows, and lubricate as required.
- Inspect window putty on outside of glass panes of older houses, and replace if needed.

Questions or concerns - contact IMPAC at 201-863-4050 ext. # 405