

## Interior Maintenance

- ❑ **General Cleaning:** Spring is a good time to clean neglected areas of the house. Dust or vacuum chair rails, window casings, tops of cabinets, and ceiling fans. Launder or dry-clean fabric draperies. Use a damp cloth to clean wood and vinyl blinds. Vacuum upholstered furniture and mattresses. Consider renting a carpet cleaner—anything you can do to remove settled dust, mites, and allergens will make for a cleaner, and healthier, home. Change air filters. To maximize energy savings and safety, have your furnace inspected and filters changed.
- ❑ **Kitchen:** If you detect grease residue, wash cabinets, backsplashes, and walls with warm water mixed with a mild detergent.
- ❑ **Bathroom:** Soap residue and fluctuations in heat and humidity can create the perfect breeding ground for mold and mildew. While you're cleaning tile, look for areas of worn or missing grout, as these may lead to more serious water damage if not repaired.
- ❑ **Air Conditioning:** Make sure air conditioning units are ready for warmer months ahead. Change the filter, check hose connections for leaks, and make sure the drain pans are draining freely. In addition, vacuum any dust that has settled on the unit and connections.
- ❑ **Attics:** Search for signs of insects or that critters have colonized. Search aggressively for mold. Proper insulation and good ventilation will deter mold growth in the attic. Take action now to prevent problems in the warmer months ahead.
- ❑ **Basements:** Must be part of any thorough seasonal maintenance effort. Dampness suggests higher than normal relative humidity, inadequate ventilation and the need for a dehumidifier.
- ❑ **Leaks:** Check for leaky faucets, clogged drains, and sweaty pipes.
- ❑ **Get Connected:** Check under kitchen and bathroom sinks to make sure connections on pipes and hoses are properly sealed. Look for any wetness around the dishwasher that could signal an existing or potential problem. Check washing machine hoses for any cracks, bulges, or dampness.

## Exteriors

- ❑ **Roof Check:** Inspect the roof for missing shingles, cracked or shifted shingles, gaps from missing nails.
- ❑ **Chimneys:** If you have a masonry chimney, check the joints between bricks or stones. Have any fallen out? Is there vegetation growing out of them? Each signals water infiltration. Consider re-sealing masonry with a clear, impermeable or water-resistant barrier material. Inspect siding. Check home exterior for cracks or holes.
- ❑ **Exterior Walls:** Check wood siding, stucco or brick for trouble spots, especially under eaves and near gutter downspouts. Water stains normally indicate that your gutters are not adequately containing roof runoff. If you have wood siding, check for openings, damaged areas or knots that have popped out, making way for carpenter ants, woodpeckers and other critters that may nest in or burrow through.
- ❑ **Foundations:** Examine your foundation from top to bottom for masonry cracks. Cracks in concrete or asphalt can expand and cause more damage in winter months, not to mention trip hazards.
- ❑ **Windows:** Leakage will admit outdoor air and let indoor air escape, so be sure to check that any caulking and weather stripping you have in place has remained intact. Springclean your windows with a storebought or homemade window cleaner.

- ❑ **Window Cleaner Recipe:** One cup rubbing alcohol, one cup water and a tablespoon of white wine vinegar will work just fine. Use with a squeegee or a soft cloth.

## Outdoors

- ❑ **Lawns:** Remove any branches, debris, and leaves that you might have missed in the fall. If uncleared, they can suffocate the grass beneath. Service summer power equipment. Empty fuel and clean lawnmower and trimmer. Sharpen lawnmower blades and change oil.
- ❑ **Water Systems:** Make sure outdoor pipes, faucets, and in-ground sprinkler systems are in working order. Once the ground thaws completely, prepare new garden beds for summer plants.
- ❑ **Decks and Patios:** Look for warped, loose, or splintered boards. Do a good sweep to remove leaves and debris accumulated between boards. The same is true for wood and composite fences, pergolas, trellises, and other structures. If you have a stone patio, a simple rinsing down should be all the maintenance required.
- ❑ **Test the generator:** If you have an emergency generator, give it a test. Make sure it's in good working order.
- ❑ **Outdoor Furniture:** Bring any stored lawn furniture outside and rinse it off, or wash it with a mild detergent. Check metal furniture for signs of rust or paint erosion; a simple remedy of spray enamel will prevent further damage from sun, rain and humidity in the months ahead.
- ❑ **Grills:** Check your gas grill instructions, and be sure that gas hoses and connections are sound and secure. You'll also want to check for propane. For charcoal grills, make certain it is clean of ash and free of grease residue.