

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:** Just as you readied your furnace for winter, now is the time to make sure that air conditioning units are in good working order for the 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; over time it can impact the air conditioner's effectiveness.
- ❑ **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:** Prone to dampness and insects, 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:** Spring is a good time to check for leaky faucets, clogged drains and sweaty pipes. Check under the kitchen and bathroom sink to make sure connections on pipes and hoses are properly sealed and look for any wetness around the dishwasher that could signal an existing or potential problem. The same is true of your laundry room; check washer machine hoses for cracks, bulges or dampness.

Exterior Maintenance

- ❑ **Roof Check:** Look 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:** When inspecting the exterior of your home, be sure to examine the foundation from top to bottom for masonry cracks. Check for cracks. Cracks in concrete or asphalt can expand and cause more damage in winter months, not to mention trip hazards.
- ❑ **Windows:** Leakage around windows 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. Spring-clean your windows—inside and out—with a store-bought or homemade window cleaner (one cup rubbing alcohol, one cup water and a tablespoon of white wine vinegar will work just fine) and either a squeegee or a soft cloth.

Outdoors

- ❑ **Lawns:** Rake the lawn to remove any branches, debris and leaves that you might have missed in the fall; if left, they can suffocate the grass beneath. Service summer power equipment. Empty fuel and clean lawnmower and trimmer. Have lawnmower blades sharpened and oil changed.
- ❑ **Water Systems:** Make sure outdoor water systems—pipes, faucets, and in-ground sprinkler systems—are in working order. Once the ground thaws completely, start preparing new garden beds for summer plants.
- ❑ **Decks and Patios:** Look for warped, loose or splintered boards, and do a good sweep to remove any leaves and debris accumulated in the space between boards. The same is true for wood and composite fences, pergolas, trellises and other structures. If you have a stone patio, a simple hose down should be all the maintenance required. Test the generator. If you have an emergency generator for power outages, give it a test, and make sure it's in good working order.
- ❑ **Outdoor Furniture:** If you stored your lawn furniture for the winter, bring it outdoors and give it a hose rinse, or wash it with a mild detergent. For metal furniture, check 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:** If your gas grill has remained idle over the winter months, check burner jets for clogs and obstructions, and be sure that gas hoses and connections are sound and secure. You'll also want to check for propane. For charcoal grill owners, make certain your grill is clean of ash and free of grease residue.