Quality Builders Warranty
CORPORATION

Homeowner Maintenance Tips

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE TIPS....3

LANDSCAPING: 3
FOUNDATION: 3
CONDENSATION: 3
CONCRETE: 3
ROOF: 4
GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS: 4
SIDING, PAINT, MASONRY AND STUCCO: 4
EXTERIOR PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS: 5

INTERIOR MAINTENANCE TIPS....6

HEATING AND COOLING: 6
AIR FILTER: 6
DEHUMIDIFICATION: 7
THERMOSTAT: 7
ELECTRICAL: 7
SMOKE DETECTORS: 8
PLUMBING: 8
SEWER, SEPTIC, & DRAINS: 8
PLUMBING PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS: 9
CABINETS AND COUNTERTOPS: 9
TUB AND SHOWER ENCLOSURES: 10
WHIRLPOOL TUB: 10
BATHROOM: 10
MOISTURE CONTROL: 10
FLOORS: 10
INTERIOR WALLS: 11
INTERIOR TRIM AND MOLDINGS: 11
CAULKING: 12
WINDOWS AND DOORS: 12
GARAGE DOORS: 12
ATTIC: 12
APPLIANCES: 13
FIREPLACE AND CHIMNEY: 13

HOME MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE 14

FALL: 15
WINTER: 16
SPRING: 17
SUMMER: 18

Protect the Value of Your Home

When you select a builder approved by QBW, you can feel confident in the quality of your home's construction.

You can continue to protect the quality of your home through regular home maintenance. A well maintained home will increase in value and be a source of pleasure for years to come. Explore the Maintenance Tips located in this document to learn about exterior issues, such as roofing, landscaping and foundations, as well as interior issues like plumbing, flooring and electrical wiring.

The following sections are a brief summary of maintenance items and tips to prevent minor problems from developing into major problems. This listing is not intended to be exhaustive or a do-it-yourself guide, but does provide useful information about the care and maintenance of your home.

Exterior Maintenance Tips

Landscaping:

Changes to your landscaping and grading can occur due to settlement of the earth as well as other types of soil movement. Typically, the grade around your home should slope one inch in the first ten inches, tapering to a two-percent slope. Always make sure the water is draining away from your foundation and that water drainage ditches or swales are free from debris and leaves. Swales and drainage areas may be permanently wet, particularly in times of heavy rain or melting snow. Do not allow sprinklers to wet the area within four feet of your foundation. Also, you should not plant shrubs within four feet of the foundation or trees within 12 feet. When applying additional top soil or mulch, be sure to maintain a 7" clearance between the soil or mulch and the siding, otherwise water may enter the joint between the foundation and the wall material or the wood may decay.

Foundation:

Foundation walls are subject to a wide variety of stresses and strains. It is not unusual for small cracks to appear in your foundation, which occur during normal settlement. It is important to understand that concrete is a porous material that will expand, contract and crack as a result of temperature changes, shrinkage, stress and settlement. **One thing to understand about concrete is that it will crack!** Hairline cracks that may appear on foundation walls are usually cosmetic as opposed to structural. Periodically inspect for cracks and seal with an appropriate waterproof caulk or cement. If applicable, make sure your sump pump is in working order.

Condensation:

Probably the most disturbing problem in a new home is condensation. Condensation or the appearance of moisture that occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with a colder surface is most prevalent in new homes, especially during the first year. Gallons of water went into the construction of your new home, from the concrete foundations to the paint on the walls. As this water slowly evaporates, the moisture takes the form of condensation. Proper ventilation is a safe way to reduce indoor humidity and condensation. Ensure that the clothes dryer is properly vented to the outside. Kitchen, bath and utility exhaust fans can be used to carry moist air outside. Adjust the registers to maintain even temperatures throughout the home. Crawl space vents should be open during temperatures above freezing.

Concrete:

Due to the large size of concrete, home and garage slabs, hairline cracks less than ¼" are common and are caused by settlement, expansion and contraction. Contraction or shrinking occurs from the normal curing process of concrete that varies depending on the time of year and the moisture conditions that exist when the concrete is poured. Slab stress and settlement are caused by soil conditions and loads such as the weight of the walls. These forces can create a variety of stresses, which in combination with seasonal temperature variations, can cause

concrete and masonry foundations to develop non-structural cracks. Long hairline cracks in slabs, garage floors, sidewalks and driveways are common. Cracks in concrete, which are exposed to the weather, should be sealed to eliminate further damage from the elements.

Roof:

Your roof will give you many years of good service if it is properly maintained. Periodically inspect your roof. You should avoid walking on it, as this will cause damage. You should inspect your roof for missing or damaged shingles or tile and have them replaced or repaired promptly. Look in the attic for water stains or wet insulation. Also check around skylights for leaks and re-caulk if necessary. Inspect the flashing in roof valleys, against walls and around the chimney; seal any gaps with a compatible waterproof caulk. Most roof shingling is not a waterproof membrane. Rather, shingles are meant to shed water down their overlapping courses. Erratic weather conditions can cause a buildup of water, either from snow or ice dams formed on the roof or in gutters or downspouts. This water may backup under the shingles or eventually seep through the shingles causing leaks. Remove ice dams from gutters and downspouts and attempt to remove ice and snow from lower portions of the roof.

Gutters and Downspouts:

Gutters and downspouts are very important and are often overlooked by many homeowners. **Don't make that mistake!** It is very important to keep gutters and downspouts free of leaves and debris. You should inspect them routinely and remove any blockage or consider installing a screening device. Gutters and downspouts were designed to carry roof water down and away from the foundation, therefore make sure your splash blocks and downspouts are positioned properly to drain the water a minimum of five feet away from the foundation. Also, make sure that the soil grade is sloping away from the home. Failure to keep gutters free from obstruction, or improper sloping away from the home, may result in water infiltration into your home.

Siding, Paint, Masonry and Stucco:

Siding materials that are exposed to the elements can become damaged; therefore the exterior of your home should be inspected twice a year. Areas in which the paint has peeled or fallen off should be repainted. Before painting, fill all cracks, separation and damage with a flexible caulk. Cracks in brick, stone and stucco should be caulked with a flexible masonry caulk, and if the mortar has fallen out, this should be repaired as well. You should closely inspect the areas around windows and doors for any gaps or deterioration of caulking and reseal if necessary. Aluminum vinyl soffit and fascia have a finish that does not require painting. Wood soffit and fascia does require painting and caulking and should be inspected annually.

Exterior Problems and Solutions:

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
Cracking/peeling of painted surfaces	Normal aging and weathering	Clean and sand surface, then prime and repaint.
Gaps at joints in wood	Wood drying out	Sand, prime and paint.
Efflorescence on masonry finishes	Crystallized soluble salts	Scrub with water and stiff brush.
Stairstep cracks in masonry finish	Normal home settlement due to expansion and contraction	Seal cracks with a flexible masonry caulk and paint.

Interior Maintenance Tips

Heating and Cooling:

You should inspect your air conditioning and heating system just before the start of their respective seasons to make sure they are in proper working order. Verify that all of the room registers are open and are not obstructed by furniture or other objects. Two kinds of registers are used: air supply registers (located on the wall, in the floor or in the ceiling) that deliver warm or cooled air into the room; and air return registers (located on walls or ceilings, or under the air handler access door) that return air from the room back into the air handler fan to be re-heated or re-cooled. If your home has high and low return air return registers on the wall, do the following: During the winter time, close the upper register and open the bottom register and during air conditioning season, reverse these registers. To regulate temperatures on different floors or rooms during different seasons, adjust the air supply registers by partially opening or closing them, thus restricting or moving additional air into each room. Interior doors in each room are undercut to allow return air to circulate throughout each room where the doors are closed. Do not close doors to regulate room temperatures. If you have a heating and cooling unit outside the home, make sure it is kept clear of obstruction. Keep the unit free of debris. Air filters should be cleaned or replaced at least every two months. Turning your heat or air conditioning off or having a wide range of settings causes the system to expend extra energy to return the room to a comfortable temperature. This leads to higher utility bills as well as excessive wear on your system. If your HVAC system should fail to come on, verify the following:

- Check to see that the thermostat is properly set.
- Check the circuit breaker in the panel box to make sure it is in the ON position.
- Check the exterior disconnect switch, located outside the home near the compressor, and reset it if necessary.
- Check the electrical disconnect switch, located near the air handler, and reset it if necessary.

Air filter:

Filter cleaning or replacement will provide cleaner air, improve airflow and help reduce utility cost. To clean, remove or replace filters, turn the fan off using the thermostat control, then carefully remove the old filter and clean or insert a new one. Replacement filters are available through most hardware stores.

Dehumidification:

Dehumidification is part of your air conditioning system. The moisture removed from the air is condensed into water, which is referred to as condensate. The condensate drain removes the water and carries it to the outside of the house. Regular maintenance of the drain pan and line should be performed to control algae buildup and eliminate water leaks.

Thermostat:

The thermostat controls the entire heating and cooling system. The thermostat provides a fan switch to circulate the air when neither heating nor cooling is needed.
To maximize energy efficiency and minimize utility bills, set the thermostat to a comfortable level (normally between 68° F to 71° F for heating and between 76° F to 78° F for cooling) and leave it there. Then set the fan switch to either the "ON" or "AUTO" position.
The less you change the thermostat setting, the more comfortable you will be, the lower your utility bills will be, and less wear and tear on the system compressor will occur. Changing settings frequently will cause the supplemental heater to run more often and turning the system on and off expends extra energy to bring the temperature back to a comfortable level. Setting air conditioning controls to a very low setting does not cool the home faster. The same principle applies to heating.

Electrical:

The electrical system in your home is designed for safe and trouble free service and meets the National Electric Code Requirements. Do not overload your circuits (plugging too many appliances into one outlet) and do not use light bulbs with a higher wattage than that specified by the fixture's manufacturer. Plug valuable electronic equipment, such as computers, TV's and VCR's, into surge protector strips. If you have an outlet that does not work, you should perform the following checks:

- Check the circuit breaker in the service panel box to make sure the circuit breaker has not tripped. If tripped, you can reset it by switching the breaker to the fully OFF position and then back to the fully ON position. This will properly reset the breaker. The circuit breaker within the panel box controls appliances, wall switches, lighting and the HVAC system. Each switch should be clearly marked as to what it controls.

- Verify that a wall switch does not control the outlet.

- If it is a GFI outlet, press the reset button on the plate. GFI outlets are often wired in a series and may possibly control other outlets throughout the home. If an outlet is not working, check all GFIs throughout the home and garage. If the outlet still does not work, contact a certified electrician.

Smoke Detectors:

The smoke detectors in your home are pre-wired, per electrical code requirements, into the main electrical system. In case of an electrical failure, a smoke detector is backed up with a 9-volt battery. Test the 9-volt battery twice a year and replace if necessary.

Plumbing:

Your plumbing system should require very little maintenance. Most importantly, however, you should be aware of the location of your water main shut off valve in case of an emergency. The temperature of your water heater should come pre-set from the factory and an acceptable temperature range should be on the label of the heater. Water temperature is usually set at 120 degrees by the manufacturer. While lower temperature settings reduce utility costs, keep in mind that dishwashers do not operate properly with settings below 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Small amounts of scale deposits will collect and settle to the bottom of the water tank. Remove this residue annually by draining the tank. Before draining the tank, shut off the power using the appropriate circuit breaker in the electrical panel box. Furthermore, completely refill water heater before returning the circuit breaker to the ON position. If your hot water heater fails to come on, verify that the circuit breaker is ON. In cases of natural gas units, verify that the gas valve is in the ON position. Occasionally homeowners hear pipe noise, which can result from temperature being set too high.

If you experience a pipe leak, promptly shut off the valve, nearest the leak and contact a professional plumber.

Faucets and fixtures will need normal maintenance and may eventually need replaced due to normal use. It is recommended to periodically close and open all shut off valves to prevent seizing from corrosion. Only use cold water when running your garbage disposal unit. Allow water to run approximately one minute after turning off the garbage disposal to properly flush drain lines. Never leave your home unheated in the winter, as this may cause pipes to freeze and burst. In colder climates, detach all garden hoses during freezing temperatures.

Sewer, Septic, & Drains:

Every plumbing fixture in the home is equipped with a drain trap, an S shaped pipe that holds water and prevents sewer gas odors from coming back into the home. If any sink, bathtub, or toilet fixture is not used frequently, turn it on periodically to replace evaporating water and keep the water trap barrier in tact. Do not pour grease into the drains and toilets or use caustic cleaners to open plugged drains. Do not use a plunger with any drain-cleaning chemical. When using a chemical drain cleaner, carefully follow the manufacturer's safety precautions. You should not put materials, such as hair, grease, lint, garbage, heavy tissue, disposable diapers or sanitary materials into the sewer system, as they may clog your sewer line. If you find a leak in your sewer line, call a qualified plumber immediately. If you have a septic system, you should have your septic tank pumped once a year.

Plumbing Problems & Solutions:

Problem	Likely Cause	Solution
No hot water from electric water heater	Tripped circuit breaker	Check and reset circuit breaker.
	Temperature setting too low	Adjust temperature setting.
Hot water recovery is slow	Burned out heating element	Replace heating element.
Toilet runs constantly	Water level in tank is too high	Adjust float arm stem in toilet water tank downward.
Toilet makes loud noise when flushed	Ball cock in water tank is not working properly	Replace ball cock in toilet water tank.
Toilet makes dripping or gurgling noise	Warped or worn out flapper valve	Replace flapper valve.
Toile backing up/or overflowing	Obstruction in line	Turn toilet intake valve off & plunge toilet.
Hose sprayer in sink drips	Dirty or defective	Clean or replace.
Slow draining sink or bathtub	Blockage such as hair in drain	Remove hair or blockage.
Water flow from faucet is reduced	Aerator at tip of faucet is clogged	Unscrew aerator screen and rinse.
Water splatters out of faucet	Air in water supply line	Open all faucets in home for 5 minutes.
Water leaking from under sink	Loose plumbing fitting	Hand tighten couplings on drain pipe.
Water dripping from shutoff valves	Loose packing nut	Open valve all the way, then tighten the nut.
Garbage disposal clogged	Obstruction in line	Use disposal wrench in bottom of disposal.
Garbage disposal will not operate	Tripped reset button	Check reset button on bottom of disposal.

Cabinets and Countertops:

Always clean cabinets and countertops with a gentle, non-abrasive detergent as they can scratch easily. Always avoid using a sharp, jagged utensil on countertops as damage may occur. If cabinet doors become loose, tighten hinges securely. Avoid exposing cabinets to steam, such as a dishwasher or a cabinet mounted coffee maker, as this can cause the wood to warp. Keep standing water away from back splashes, side splashes and seams around the sink on laminate countertops. These areas are prone to water damage since moisture will eventually break down the seal and cause swelling or delamination of the countertop. Check seams periodically and re-caulk as necessary.

Tub and Shower Enclosures:

Shower enclosures create an extreme amount of moisture, therefore it is recommended to frequently check all joints. Over time cracks and separations between the tub and shower stall, wall surfaces, or bathroom floors will appear. Maintaining these areas is critical as excessive moisture can severely damage underlying materials. After showering, check the floor outside of the shower to make sure it is dry. A common problem occurs when small amounts of water splash out onto the floor at the faucet end of the enclosure and causes wood rot if not dried up. Check caulking periodically to ensure against leaking. Caulking is part of routine maintenance and should be the responsibility of the homeowner.

Whirlpool tub:

Never run the pump motor without the proper water level in the tub. Running the tub without proper levels of water can damage it. Also turn the pump off during draining. Do not add bath oil, bubbles or soap or any other liquid to the water.

Bathroom:

Keep bathrooms ventilated to reduce moisture and subsequent mildew problems. Depending on your water source, you may experience rust stains on your bathroom fixtures; these should be cleaned with a rust-removing cleaning product that will not damage the enamel or finish of your fixtures. If you live in an area with hard water, consider installing a water softener. Clean porcelain, cultured marble tubs and sinks, fiberglass showers and tub/shower combinations, and shower stall floors with warm water and non-abrasive cleaner. Clean glass doors with a commercial glass cleaner. Check bathtub stoppers and shower floor drain grates for hair accumulation.

Moisture Control:

Moisture and mildew are two problems that will occur in any room where water vapor is present. To reduce mildew, turn on the exhaust fan or slightly open a window while showering. Wipe down the showering enclosure when done and then hang up towels and washcloths to dry. To clean mildewed surfaces, apply a liquid mildew agent in a well-ventilated room and thoroughly rinse with clear water to disinfect.

Floors:

Floors are usually made of concrete or wood, but they may be covered by a wide variety of materials. Carpeting is durable and requires minimal care. Color variations and shading may be noticeable and may depend on the surface texture and the pile fiber of the carpet. Ceramic tile is easy to maintain and impervious to water. The grout joints are not waterproof and require special attention to prevent water seepage. Most hardwood floors are pre-finished at the factory with baked on wax coating or urethane coating. Wood floor tone grain and color variations are normal and reflect the characteristics of real hard wood. Some squeaking and separating of the

hardwood floors is normal and is caused by seasonal weather and humidity changes. Resilient floor coverings are usually installed in kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry areas. Before cleaning a resilient floor, carefully read the manufacturers cleaning and care recommendations. Always remember when cleaning your floors, no matter what type of floor covering you have, to lift your furniture when moving it – never drag furniture across flooring as it may cause damage. Vacuum carpets regularly and have them professionally cleaned as necessary. Hardwood floors, tile, vinyl or linoleum floors should be mopped regularly making sure not to leave excess water on the floor after cleaning. If you have tile floors, you should check the grouting around the tiles and re-grout if needed. The grout may need to be periodically sealed to prevent discoloration. Hardwood floors may require refinishing after several years depending, on the amount of traffic through the household.

Interior Walls:

Your home has two types of walls: load bearing and non-load bearing. Any alteration of load bearing walls may reduce the strength of the structure by altering its unit load capacity, its load bearing or its support capacity. Drywall is screwed or nailed to the studs of the ceiling and wall surfaces. The seams where sheets of drywall come together are taped, spackled with joint compound, allowed to dry, and then sanded to prepare them for finishing. Minor cracks in drywall and some nail-pops are normal occurrences in new homes. The generally accepted building standard is that slight imperfections, such as nail pops, seam lines, and cracks not exceeding 1/8" are common. Cracks should be repaired with joint compound, sanded and repainted. Hairline cracks at inside corners can be repaired with a flexible, paintable caulk. Nail pops can be repaired as follows:

- Reset the nail deeper in the drywall or replace it with a new nail.
- Place another nail 1" or 2" away and hammer it until it is below the drywall surface.
- Cover the area with spackling compound and allow to dry completely. The area may need to be covered with spackling a second time.
- Sand until smooth and repaint.

Wallpaper seams can become loose or curl due to climate changes. Re-attach loose wallpaper with a wallpaper adhesive.

Interior Trim and Moldings:

Homes are built with various moldings such as floor moldings, door cases and other trims. Some separations of wood trims and moldings are normal and are either caused by home settlement or shrinkage/expansion due to extreme dryness or humidity.

Weather stripping around windows and doors should be checked periodically and replaced if it becomes loose or damaged. Windows and doors can expand, contract and warp due to changes in temperature and moisture levels. Abrupt changes in weather may cause vinyl windows to bind

or stick. Should this occur, apply silicone spray to the window sash cracks. Window condensation occurs when warm, moist air comes in contact with a colder surface. While moisture may appear on the windows, this does not indicate a window problem. Wipe up condensation as quickly as possible in order to avoid staining the drywall, window sill or caulking.

Caulking:

Caulking is a building joint sealant used to seal dissimilar materials that are joined. In time, caulking hardens and cracks and should be removed and replaced prior to painting. Caulking is part of routine maintenance and should be the responsibility of the homeowner. Caulking around windows and doors should be checked and re-caulked as needed, at least twice a year.

Windows and Doors:

Weather stripping around windows and doors should be checked periodically, and replaced if it becomes loose or damaged. Windows and doors can expand and contract due to changes in temperature and moisture levels. Doors that stick may require adjustment. Check the hinges to make sure that screws are tight. If necessary, sand the edge of the door that is sticking until it closes properly, and paint or varnish the sanded area to protect the wood. Patio doors should be regularly caulked around the door and sills to prevent moisture penetration. If not properly maintained, water will penetrate under the sill and cause the sub-floor to deteriorate over time. Windows are designed to protect from the elements under normal weather conditions. During severe weather conditions, you may experience water or air penetration, which is not indicative of a construction defect but rather of the severe weather condition.

Garage doors:

CAUTION: The installation of a garage door opener, unless installed as an available option, may void your garage door warranty. Garage doors are warrantied for proper mechanical operation. Installation of an opener, by others, may alter the operation of the door. The builder cannot be responsible for its mechanical operation. Garage doors with remote openers can be operated manually by pulling the release cord at the top of the garage door, near the track, and then lifting the garage door open.

Attic:

When inspecting your attic, be sure not to step on the drywall ceiling below, as it was not designed to bear weight. Make sure that there is no insulation or other materials blocking any vents. Materials stored in an attic can be a fire hazard, and most attics are not designed for storage, (you should check with your builder as to whether it has storage capacity or not, as your ceiling joist will sag if too much weight is loaded on the joists). Your attic may have louvered openings to allow moist air to escape. Louvered openings should remain unobstructed at all times. If they are closed, harmful quantities of moisture may accumulate.

Appliances:

Your new electric or gas appliances come with instruction manuals. You should review the manufacturer's manuals for proper operation and maintenance of all appliances. Make sure you fill out and mail all warranty cards for your appliances. If an appliance should fail to work, check the following things:

- Make sure the appliance is plugged in.
- If it is on a GFI outlet, use the reset button.
- Make sure the circuit beaker on the panel box is in the ON position.
- Some appliances have fuses or breakers built in – check the service manual.
- If you suspect a gas leak, turn off the main valve near the meter and call the Gas Company immediately.

Finally, you should periodically check your dryer vent for lint or other materials to make sure it is not obstructed, as this can be a fire hazard.

Fireplace and Chimney:

Your fireplace, chimney and fluke should be inspected and cleaned annually. Before building the first fire of the season, check the fluke for soot build-up, and inspect the fireplace for loose or cracked firebrick. Always keep your damper closed when not using your fireplace, to stop heat from escaping up the chimney. Do not burn pressure treated wood, scrap lumber, Christmas trees, trash, cardboard, plastic or any flammable material. Burning these materials may cause brick or fluke liners to crack.

Home Maintenance Schedule

Regular maintenance is the key. Inspecting your home on a regular basis and following good maintenance practices is the best way to protect your investment in your home. Establish a routine, and you will find the work is easy to accomplish and not very time consuming.

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

- Make sure air vents indoors and outside are not blocked by snow or debris.
- Check and change range hood filters on a monthly basis.
- Test the ground fault circuit interrupters monthly by pushing the test button, which should cause the reset button to pop out.

FALL:

- Have your furnace or heating systems serviced by a qualified service company every two years for a gas furnace and every year for an oil furnace.

- Lubricate the circulating pump on the hot water heating system.

- Check and clean or replace air filters each month during the heating season.

- Vacuum electric baseboard heaters to remove dust.

- Remove the grill on forced air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.

- Have well water tested for quality. It is recommended that you test for bacteria once a year.

- Check the sump pump and line to ensure proper operation and to ensure that there are no line obstructions or visible leaks.

- Remove screens from inside casement windows to allow for the heating system to keep condensation off window glass.

- Ensure all doors to the outside shut tightly and check other doors for ease of use. Replace door weather stripping if required.

- Ensure windows and skylights close tightly.

- Cover outside air conditioning window units.

- Ensure that the ground around your home slopes away from the foundation wall so that water does not drain into your basement.

- Clean leaves from roofs and downspouts and test the downspouts to ensure proper drainage from the roof.

- Check chimneys for obstructions such as bird nests.

- Drain and store outdoor hoses. Close the valve to outdoor hose connections and drain the hose bib, unless your house has a frost-proof hose bib.

- If you have a septic tank, measure the sludge and scum to determine if the tank needs to be emptied before the spring. Tanks should be pumped at least once every three years.

WINTER:

- Check and clean or replace furnace air filters, each month, during the heating season.

- After consulting your hot water system owner's manual, turn the electric off to the water heater and drain water tank. This will help control settlement and maintain efficiency. Refill the water tank and then turn the electric back on to water heater.

- Clean your humidifiers two or three times during the winter season.

- Vacuum the bathroom fan grills.

- Vacuum fire and smoke detectors as dust or spider webs can prevent them from functioning.

- Check gauges on all fire extinguishers, and recharge or replace them if necessary.

- Check fire escape routes, door and window locks, and lighting around outside of your house.

- Check all faucets for signs of dripping and change washers as necessary. If you have a fixture that is not used frequently, such as a laundry tub, spare bathroom sink or tub, shower stall or toilet, run water briefly to keep some water in the trap.

- Clean drains in dishwashers, sinks, bathtubs and shower stalls.

- Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working properly and to prevent them from seizing.

SPRING:

- Have fire place/wood stove chimney cleaned and serviced as needed.
- Check air conditioning system and have it serviced every two or three years.
- Clean or replace air conditioning filter, if applicable.
- Check the humidifier and clean it, if necessary.
- Check smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and security alarms; replace the batteries as needed.
- Clean all windows, screens, and hardware. Check your screens to see if any repairs are needed.
- Open any valves to your outside hose connections.
- Examine the foundation for cracks, leaks or signs of moisture; repair as required. Ensure the sump pump is operating properly.
- Check downspouts for loose joints and clear any obstructions to ensure water flows away from the foundation.
- Clear all drainage ditches and culverts from debris.

SUMMER:

- Monitor basement humidity and use a dehumidifier to maintain a safe, relative humidity.

- Check basement pipes for condensation or dripping and take corrective action. For example reduce humidity and/or insulate cold water pipes.

- Deep clean your carpets and rugs.

- Vacuum bathroom fan grill.

- Disconnect the duct connected to the dryer and vacuum lint from duct.

- Check security of all handrails.

- Check smooth functioning of all windows and lubricate as required.

- Lubricate door hinges and tighten screws as needed.

- Lubricate garage door hardware and ensure proper operation.

- Lubricate the automatic garage door opener, motor, chain, etc. and ensure that the auto reverse mechanism is properly adjusted.

- Check and replace damaged caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors.

- Check exterior wood and trim for signs of deterioration. Clean and replace/ refinish as needed.

- Remove any plants or roots that contact or penetrate the siding or brick.

- Check the overall condition of your roof. Note the condition of all shingles and examine all roof flashing, such as chimney and roof joints, for any signs of cracking or leakage.

- Check the chimney cap and the caulking between the cap and the chimney.

- Repair driveway and walkways as needed.

- Repair any damaged steps that present a safety problem.