

Home Maintenance Checklist

Timing is everything, especially when it comes to home maintenance. Maintenance performed regularly and "on schedule" can help maximize the lifespan of your home and its systems, and prevent expensive problems. Timing may vary according to where you live, so this checklist is designed to give you basic suggestions from which you can pick and choose what's right for you, your home, your location and your family.

* If your home was built pre-1978, hire a trained, certified lead abatement specialist to inspect for lead-based paint and recommend steps to address any hazards. Call The National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-5323 or visit www.epa.gov/lead for more information. Also, check your local health and environmental agency for finding specialists.

TASKS	S P R I N G	F A L L	A N N U A L
FOUNDATIONS AND BASEMENTS			
Inspect for signs of termites and wood decay			✓
Check grading to assure that water will drain away from foundation			✓
Check basement for dampness or leaking following wet weather			✓
DOORS AND WINDOWS			
Check doors, windows and trim for finish failure	✓	✓	
Check glazed openings for loose putty	✓	✓	
Check for broken glass and damaged screens	✓	✓	
Take down screens (if removable); clean and store them			✓
Lubricate window hardware	✓	✓	
Check weatherstripping for damage and tightness of fit	✓	✓	
Check caulking at doors, windows and all other openings and joints between different materials (e.g. wood and masonry)	✓	✓	
EXTERIOR WALLS			
Check masonry for cracks and loose joints	✓	✓	
Check painted surfaces for paint failure	✓	✓	
Check siding and trim for damage or decay	✓	✓	
Check all trim for tightness of fit at joints, caulk	✓	✓	
ROOF			
Check for damaged or loose shingles and blisters	✓	✓	
Check underside of roof (or attic) where accessible for water stains or dampness	✓	✓	
Check for damaged flashings around vents and chimneys	✓	✓	
Check for damaged gutters, downspouts, hangers, strainers and splash blocks or if paint is needed on them	✓	✓	
Clean gutters, strainers, downspouts and splash blocks	✓	✓	
Check vents, louvers and chimney caps and housings for cracks and debris			✓
Check fascias and soffits for paint failure and decay	✓	✓	
Check antenna guy wires and supports	✓	✓	
Evaluate roof for future replacement			✓

TASKS	S P R I N G	F A L L	A N N U A L
INTERIOR SURFACES			
Check all finished surfaces for dirt, finish failure and required repairs*	✓	✓	
Check all joints in ceramic tile, laminated plastic and similar surfaces	✓	✓	
Check caulk or grouting around bathtubs, showers and sinks	✓	✓	
FLOORS			
Check for wear and damage, particularly where one material meets another (e.g., wood and carpet)			✓
Evaluate for replacement or refinishing			✓
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM			
Check condition of cords to all appliances and plugs		✓	✓
Check areas where wiring is exposed and replace at first sign of damage	✓	✓	
Check smoke detectors	✓	✓	
If fuses blow or breakers trip frequently, call an electrician to locate the cause and make repairs			✓
HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEMS			
Clean or change any air filters	✓	✓	
Have systems checked by qualified service person	✓	✓	
Remove window air conditioners for winter or put weatherproof covers on them			✓
Clean dirt and dust from around furnaces, condensing unit, grills and registers	✓	✓	
Service humidifier and dehumidifier			✓
PLUMBING SYSTEM			
Check faucets hose bibbs, flush valves and sinks for leakage and corrosion	✓	✓	
Have service person check septic system			✓
Check water heater for leakage, corrosion and obstruction			✓
GROUNDS AND YARD			
Drain outside water lines and hoses			✓
Clean area wells, window wells and storm drains	✓	✓	
Check driveways and sidewalks for cracks and yard for soil erosion	✓	✓	

Schedule of Estimated Normal Lifespan

Appliances

Life Estimate in Years

Dishwashers
5 to 12

Disposals
5 to 12

Washers and dryers
8 to 12

Water heaters
8 to 12

Refrigerators
15 to 20

Stoves
15 to 20

Gutters and Downspouts

Galvanized
15 to 20

Copper
life of home if well-maintained

Heating and Air Conditioning

Warm air furnace
8 to 12

Heat pumps
8 to 12

Air conditioning compressors
8 to 15

Gas chillers
8 to 15

Hot water boilers
30 to 50

Plumbing

Gas hot water heater
8 to 12

Electric hot water heater
10 to 15

Private disposal system (septic)
15 to 20

Galvanized water pipes
30 to 50

Roofs

Selvage or asphalt roll
12 to 20

Wood shake and shingle
12 to 20

Fiberglass
15 to 20

Asphalt
15 to 20

Asbestos shingle
30 to 50

Slate
40 to 75

A Massachusetts Consumer Guide to HOME IMPROVEMENT

getting started

Before You Begin the Project

Be sure to *plan carefully* before investing thousands of dollars into home improvements.

Think about the specific design you want (consult an architect or designer if necessary) and decide on a budget.

Think about the materials you want to use. Visit home improvement centers, read magazines featuring distinctive home designs, or talk to others who have completed similar renovations.

Clearly describe the work you want done in a specification sheet and floor plan for all contractors who bid on a job.

Contact a professional building industry association for advice on the home improvement process, including the selection of a contractor.

hiring

Before You Hire a Contractor

Interview at least three contractors and request a written estimate.

Check with the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (617-727-3200 x25205) or the **Office of Consumer Affairs** (toll free 1-888-283-3757) to make sure that the workers that you hire are *currently* registered with the state.

Most residential contractors and service providers doing business in the Commonwealth must be registered. The state issues contractors an identification card with a six-digit number and the effective dates of registration.

If the contractor or subcontractor is not registered, you will not be entitled to compensation from the state if something goes wrong with your job.

Confirm references for each contractor.

Look at the jobs the contractor has completed. Contact other homeowners who have hired the contractor and find out if they have had any problems. Check the contractor's complaint history with the Attorney General's office (617-727-8400) or the Better Business Bureau (617-426-9000; 508-755-2548; 413-734-3114).

signing contracts

Before You Sign a Contract

Always ask for a detailed written contract, even for small projects. State law requires home improvement contracts over \$1,000 to be in writing. Consumer Affairs can provide you with a sample contract.

Be sure the contract contains:

- * the total price of the work;
- * the payment schedule (by law, the contractor can not collect more than one-third of the cost of the contract in advance, unless special order materials are needed);
- * a provision for changes, or "extras";
- * a detailed list of specifications/materials;
- * start and completion dates;
- * a copy of the contractor's insurance;
- * other details particular to your job.

Be sure the contractor obtains the building permit. If you apply for the permit, you may not be eligible for compensation from the state should something go wrong.

If you are financing your home

improvements, be aware that contractors are not allowed to lend you the money or act in association with any lending institutions if the loan is secured by a mortgage on your home. Similarly, a contractor cannot offer you financing with a lender if your home is used as collateral.

got problems?

After a Problem Arises

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation manages an Arbitration Program to help consumers resolve claims against registered home improvement contractors. A professional arbitrator hears the case with both parties present. Consumers may file for arbitration anytime within two years of signing a home improvement contract.

Guaranty Fund

The Home Improvement Contractor Guaranty Fund was created as a fund of last resort for consumers who have lost money to a home improvement contractor. Consumers may be eligible to receive up to \$10,000 from the Fund.

Contact Consumer Affairs (toll free 1-888-283-3757) for more information about the Arbitration Program or the Guaranty Fund.

Source: Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation.



Seasonal Home Maintenance Schedule

Fall Checklist

Outside

- Check all weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors. Replace or repair as needed.
- Check for cracks and holes in house siding; fill with caulking as necessary.
- Remove window air conditioners, or put weatherproof covers on them.
- Take down screens (if removable type). Clean and store.
- Check storm windows and doors; clean and repair as needed. Put back up (if removable type).
- Drain outside faucets.
- Clean gutters and drain pipes so leaves won't clog them.
- Check roofs for leaks; repair as necessary.
- Check flashing around vents, skylights, and chimneys for leaks.
- Check chimney for damaged chimney caps and loose or missing mortar
- Check chimney flue; clean obstructions. Make sure damper closes tightly.

Inside

- Check insulation wherever possible. Replace or add as necessary.
- Have heating system and heat pump serviced; have humidifier checked. Change or clean filters on furnace.
- Drain hot water heater and remove sediment from bottom of tank; clean burner surfaces; adjust burners.
- Check all faucets for leaks; replace washers if necessary.
- Check and clean humidifier in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean refrigerator coils.

Spring Checklist

Outside

- Check all weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors, especially if you have air conditioning.
- Check outside house for cracked or peeling paint. Caulk and repaint as necessary.
- Remove, clean, and store storm windows (if removable).
- Check all door and window screens; patch or replace as needed. Put screens up (if removable type).

Inside

- Replace filters on air conditioners.
- Check dryer vent, stove hood, and room fans; clean them. Change or clean filters on furnace.
- Check seals on refrigerator and freezer; clean refrigerator coils; clean burner surfaces; adjust burners.
- Clean fireplace; leave damper open for improved ventilation if home is not air conditioned.
- Check basement wall and floor for dampness; if too moist, remedy as appropriate.
- Clean dehumidifier according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Check leaky faucets and replace washers as necessary.
- Check attic for proper ventilation; open vents.
- Clean drapes and blinds; repair as needed.

Source: A Guide to Homeownership, Fannie Mae, 1996.

51

A Massachusetts Consumer Guide to HOME IMPROVEMENT

getting started

Before You Begin the Project

Be sure to *plan carefully* before investing thousands of dollars into home improvements.

Think about the specific design you want (consult an architect or designer if necessary) and decide on a budget.

Think about the materials you want to use. Visit home improvement centers, read magazines featuring distinctive home designs, or talk to others who have completed similar renovations.

Clearly describe the work you want done in a specification sheet and floor plan for all contractors who bid on a job.

hiring

Before You Hire a Contractor

Interview at least three contractors and request a written estimate.

Check with the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (617-727-3200 x25205) or the Office of Consumer Affairs (toll free 1-888-283-3757) to make sure that the workers that you hire are *currently* registered with the state.

Most residential contractors and service providers doing business in the Commonwealth must be registered. The state issues contractors an identification card with a six-digit number and the effective dates of registration.

If the contractor or subcontractor is not registered, you will not be entitled to compensation from the state if something goes wrong with your job.

Confirm references for each contractor. Look at the jobs the contractor has completed. Contact other homeowners who have hired the contractor and find out if they have had any problems. Check the contractor's complaint history with the Attorney General's office (617-727-8400) or the Better Business Bureau (617-426-9000; 508-755-2548; 413-734-3114).

signing contracts

Before You Sign a Contract

Always ask for a detailed written contract, even for small projects. State law requires home improvement contracts over \$1,000 to be in writing. Consumer Affairs can provide you with a sample contract.

Be sure the contract contains:

- * the total price of the work;
- * the payment schedule (by law, the contractor can not collect more than one-third of the cost of the contract in advance, unless special order materials are needed);
- * a provision for changes, or Aextras@;
- * a detailed list of specifications/materials;
- * start and completion dates;
- * a copy of the contractor's insurance;
- * other details particular to your job.

Be sure the contractor obtains the building permit. If you apply for the permit, you may not be eligible for compensation from the state should something go wrong.

If you are financing your home improvements, be aware that contractors are not allowed to lend you the money or act in association with any lending institutions if the loan is secured by a mortgage on your home. Similarly, a contractor cannot offer you financing with a lender if your home is used as collateral.

got problems?

After a Problem Arises

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation manages an Arbitration Program to help consumers resolve claims against registered home improvement contractors. A professional arbitrator hears the case with both parties present. Consumers may file for arbitration anytime within two years of signing a home improvement contract.

Guaranty Fund

The Home Improvement Contractor Guaranty Fund was created as a fund of last resort for consumers who have lost money to a home improvement contractor. Consumers may be eligible to receive up to \$10,000 from the Fund.

Contact Consumer Affairs (toll free 1-888-283-3757) for more information about the Arbitration Program or the Guaranty Fund.

Source: Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation.

52