

## “Maintaining Your New Home”

Buying a home is exciting, but most homeowners quickly realize nobody really teaches you how to take care of it. The good news is that a few simple maintenance habits can save you thousands of dollars in repairs later. Even when life gets busy, your home is still dealing with rain, heat, wind, humidity, and everyday wear and tear — so staying ahead of small issues is one of the smartest things you can do as a homeowner.

One of the most important things to stay on top of is fire safety. Test your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors every month to make sure they're working properly. While you're at it, clean the filters in your kitchen hood vent and check your dryer vent for lint buildup. These are easy tasks that help reduce fire risks and keep your home safer.

Another must-do is changing your HVAC air filters regularly. Your furnace and air conditioning system work much harder when filters are dirty, which can lead to higher power bills and expensive repairs. Depending on the type of filter you use, they should usually be changed every 30 to 90 days. If you have pets, allergies, or live in an older home, you may need to replace them more often.

Your roof and gutters also need regular attention, even if you can't see problems from the ground. Leaves, branches, and debris can trap moisture and eventually cause leaks or water damage. Gutters should generally be cleaned at least twice a year, or more often if you have a lot of trees around your house. It's also smart to check your roof in late spring or after major storms to make sure nothing is sitting on it that could damage shingles over time.

For homeowners in cities or high-traffic neighborhoods, don't forget about your doors and locks. Exterior doorknobs and deadbolts get used constantly, and screws can loosen over time. Checking them once or twice a year only takes a few minutes and helps keep your home secure.

If your home has a basement or crawlspace, you may also have a sump pump. This device helps prevent flooding by pumping water away from your home during heavy rain. Test it at least once a year — especially before spring and summer storm season — to make sure it's working properly. Water damage can become incredibly expensive very quickly.

Finally, keep an eye on vines or ivy growing on the outside of your house. While they may look charming, they can trap moisture against siding, brick, or wood and eventually cause damage. Fall is usually the easiest time to remove them before the plants become brittle and harder to pull away cleanly.

### **Simple Home Maintenance Checklist**

- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors monthly
- Clean kitchen hood vent and dryer vent regularly
- Change HVAC/furnace filters every 30–90 days
- Inspect roof for debris at least once a year
- Clean gutters twice a year (or more if surrounded by trees)
- Tighten loose exterior door hardware twice yearly
- Test sump pump annually
- Remove vines and ivy growing on the house

Taking care of a home doesn't have to be overwhelming. A little preventative maintenance throughout the year can help you avoid major headaches, protect your investment, and keep your home comfortable and safe for years to come.