

LIVING GREEN NEWS

Volume 1, Number 8
November 2008

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Home Preventative Maintenance (continued):

This is the second part of our discussion on home preventative maintenance and there will be more in the December issue. Please refer to the October issue of the Living Green News for part one dealing with 1) furnace / HVAC inspection and 2) getting the fireplace ready. The October issue also covers tips to follow if your home will be vacant for any length of time.

3) Check the Exterior, Doors, Windows, Attic Openings, and Receptacles

These are all areas where cold or hot air can enter or leave the house. All home centers sell products that can be used to help with the following issues. Ask one of the home center associates to help you find the right product for the right job. Some of these are simple fixes and can be done by the home owner.

- Inspect the exterior for cracks and exposed entry points around pipes and seal them. Home centers carry a foam spray that works very well for sealing around pipe and crawl space openings and cracks. Use mortar for any cracks around bricks.
- Test for air leaks around doors and windows. This can be done by using a lighted candle and running it around the part where the windows and doors meet the molding and frame respectively. This is done on the inside of the house keeping the candle about 2 inches away from the windows and doors. You don't want to start a fire by keeping the candle too close to the wood. The lighted candle will flicker or blow out if there is air coming through from the outside. Use weather stripping around doors to prevent cold air from entering the home and caulk around the outside window molding.
- Replace cracked glass in windows and, if you end up replacing the entire window, prime and paint exposed wood and caulk around the window molding. Many windows today are double or triple glazed with an odorless and colorless gas between the panes of glass. If there is a crack in any of the panes of glass, the window might have to be replaced and should only be done by a professional. Gas is denser than the atmosphere, providing more thermal efficiency than having air between the panes.

- Many homes today have storm windows installed on the outside of their existing windows or built in the window system itself. Make sure your storm windows are closed cold or very hot weather. This should net a difference in your utility bills during the peak temperatures.
- Insulate your attic access door. You lose a great deal of heated/cooled air through this opening. This can be done as simply as putting a piece of foam over the opening in the attic. If you want to use insulation, a frame or cover should be built over the opening in the attic and attach the insulation to the frame or cover.
- Add insulation covers to all your interior outlets and light switches that are located on an outside wall in your home. These are pieces of foam that have punched out openings for switches and receptacles. All you have to do is take the cover plate off, insert the foam, and re-install the cover plate.
Caution – do not touch any of the wires or metal parts of the switches or receptacles. It's a good idea to turn the power off to the circuit you are working with. This can be done at your electrical panel. It's better to be safe than sorry.
- Check your outside dryer vent cover. Make sure the louvers on the cover are free from lint or other debris so it will close properly when the dryer is not running. Also check to see if the cover frame is properly caulked. If there are any gaps or holes in the caulking, add a bead of caulk to those openings. This might be a good time to inspect the inside of your dryer vent line and clean it out. A build up of lint in the line or blocking the outside vent cover will force your dryer to work harder, causing an increase to your gas or electric bill or worse, causing a fire. The harder your dryer has to work, the quicker parts, or even the dryer, will wear out. If you don't feel comfortable doing this on your own, hire a professional.
NOTE: Do not use silicone to seal any area, or around any area, that you intend to paint. Paint will not adhere to the silicone. There are several kinds of caulk or sealants, so, if you are not sure, check with a home center associate, paint merchant, or professional to determine the right kind to use for the area you want to seal.

4) Inspect Roof, Gutters & Downspouts

- If your weather temperature will fall below 32 degrees in the winter, adding extra insulation to the attic will prevent warm air from creeping to your roof and causing ice dams. Ice formed on the roof will back up under the shingles and could cause leaks in the attic and inside the house.
- Check flashing to ensure water cannot enter the home. Use a roof sealant to caulk around the flashing.
- Replace worn roof shingles or tiles.
- Check the vent boots and ceiling fan penetrations that protrude through the roof. If they are worn or the seal has openings, they must be fixed or replaced. A professional can help with this repair.
- Clean out the gutters and use a hose to spray water down the downspouts to clear away debris.
- Consider installing leaf guards on the gutters to prevent debris from blocking the flow of water and/or extensions on the downspouts to direct water away from the home.
 - ▲ Ice dams, improperly sealed flashing, worn roof shingles or tiles, worn penetrations through the roof, and debris in the gutters and downspouts can cause leaks and damage to the interior of your home.

5) Prepare Landscaping & Outdoor Surfaces

- Trim trees if branches hang too close to the house or electrical wires.
 - ▲ A strong wind could cause the branches to cut or damage the electrical wires connected to your house, thus interrupting your home's electricity. Not only will you be without electricity until the Utility Company can come out to your house, but live electrical lines that have fallen on your property, are a danger to your home, pets and humans.
 - ▲ A strong wind could also cause the blowing branches to damage the siding, windows, or roof of your house. Why spend money repairing your home when all you have to do is trim back the branches?
- Ask a gardener when your trees should be pruned to prevent injury.
- Plant spring flower bulbs and lift bulbs that cannot winter over, such as dahlias, in areas where the ground freezes.
- Seal driveways, brick patios and wood decks. This keeps the elements from penetrating and causing heaving, cracking, or rotting.

- Don't automatically remove dead vegetation from gardens as some provide attractive scenery in an otherwise dreary, winter yard. If you're not sure, check with your local garden center or Cooperative to determine which ones should be removed.
- Move sensitive potted plants indoors or to a sheltered area during cold months.

Quotable Quote:

The definition of happiness is "The full use of your powers along lines of excellence".

John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)

Trivia:

Famous Firsts of the 1900's:

Charlotte Cooper

1900 --- 1st woman to win an Olympic Gold Medal (for tennis)

Ray Harroun

1911 --- 1st winner of the Indianapolis 500 car race. His average speed was 74.59 mph, he finished in 6 hours, 42 minutes, 8 seconds

Franklin D. Roosevelt

1939 --- 1st US president to speak on television. (Spoke at the opening session of the New York World's Fair on April 30, 1939.)

Sir Roger Bannister

1954 --- 1st person recorded to run a mile race in under four minutes. He broke the four minute barrier at Imey Road, Oxford on the 6 May. His time was 3 minutes 59.4 seconds

Margaret Chase Smith

1964 --- 1st woman nominated for president of the US by a major political party, at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco

Sarah Caldwell

1976 --- 1st woman to conduct the Metropolitan Opera in New York City

Barney Clark

1982 -- 1st recipient of a permanent artificial heart, on Dec. 2. He lived until March 23, 1983

McCaughey septuplets

Kenneth Robert, Alexis May, Natalie Sue, Kelsey Ann, Nathan Roy, Brandon James, and Joel Steven

1997 --- 1st surviving set of septuplets. Conceived as the result of fertility drugs, they were born in Des Moines, Iowa on November 19, 1997