

ASK THE INSPECTOR COLUMN FOR APRIL 27, 2016
HEADLINE: SPRING CHECK-UP FOR HOMES

Each year, I get a number of readers ask about a check list for spring maintenance. This year I was asked to “skip the obvious” and cover the tricks that I have learned over the years.

- A) If you have a dehumidifier, get it ready for the summer. Clean the soft foam filter in the back and then test run it. Check your tank or, even better, add a drainage hose that can reach your sump hole or floor drain. Most dehumidifiers are fitted with a garden hose end. Maintaining a humidity level under 60% is a wise idea come summer. Every home with a basement should have a dehumidifier.
- B) If you have a humidifier on your furnace, replace the cartridge or foam sleeve or clean it with CLR. Check to see if you have a slide over cover that separates the opening for the humidifier from the ducts so the air-conditioned air stays in the ducting.
- C) Give your exposed pipes a once over. Some time ago, I installed foam insulation and that works very well from an energy efficiency point of view. I slip them off at the joints and give this a look over.
- D) Disconnect the dryer line and inspect it. Ours is quite long and, when we installed a gas dryer at the church, we installed hard metal duct, which is now code. If you still have the plastic flex duct, make the switch to the flex metal at minimum, as new dryers function at a higher temperature. I have seen plastic duct practically plugged and there are cases where this has caused a fire.
- E) This is the time of year to get your furnace serviced. Most heating companies have not started any air conditioner installations and their service technicians are slow. They tend to take their time and I feel you get a better job.
- F) Test the pressure relief valve on your hot water tank. Follow the manufacturer’s instruction and be careful, the test may release some very hot water!
- G) Take the covers off the bathroom fans and vacuum them out; it is amazing how much stuff gets in these fans over the winter.
- H) If you have an HRV for ventilation, clean the core and the disposable filters. If you have a VenMar HRV, there is a recall on some models. Write down your serial number and go to www.venmar.ca
- I) Doors and windows take a beating over the winter. Check all of the hinges, clean and lubricate the window tracks and give them all a general look over for smooth operation.
- J) Walk the exterior of your home slowly and check your siding for any wear or damage. Look for deteriorated caulking and any weather related aging conditions. Because we live in the country, I especially watch the area at the foundation and

- siding for signs of any four legged visitors; block up their entrances with steel wool.
- K) This is a good time to trim any trees and branches before the gardens are in full bloom.
 - L) Wait for the next good rain and go for a walk around your home. You will find some pockets of water that were not there last year. Drainage around a home, especially a block basement that lacks a waterproof membrane, is very important. Make sure all the rain and ground water flows away from your home. Check the downspout extensions from your eavestrough and consider splash blocks for the end of the downspouts.
 - M) The same comment as for your furnace; contact your WETT certified chimney sweep now. These professionals are always booked up by fall, so they appreciate the work in the late spring and early summer. If your chimney is brick, ask your sweep to take a good look at the condition of the bricks, clay liner and the cap.
 - N) Garage doors seem to take a beating in the winter. Grease the tracks every year and use lithium spray grease on the drive chains. Check the auto reverse to make sure it is operating correctly. Watch your door go up and down a couple of times from the inside. If the door is not tracking smoothly, this will prematurely wear on your opener. Any adjustments to a garage door should be done by a pro.
 - O) If you own a pair of binoculars, take a few minutes and give your roof a good look over. While this past winter was one of the mildest on record, any extremes in temperatures can be hard on a roof, especially one that is poorly vented. Don't ignore a metal roof. Fasteners can work loose and flashings still need attention. Make note of any questionable areas and, once the weather warms up enough for sealants to set up properly, approach your roof maintenance.
 - P) The last thing I recommend is to remove the piece of plywood you put on the top of the air conditioner. We quit recommending cover them some years ago when I heard that, if they are left on too long, your cabinet will rust prematurely. Make sure the air conditioner has not settled over the winter, as air conditioners should be level. Get this serviced when the furnace is done and check inside the cabinet for any debris; one year I found a rodent nest in ours.

This should not take a lot of time and if you find any areas that need additional work then you can schedule it as you please. I found some years ago that. if you let this wait until May, the outside work beckons and somethings get missed.

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