

## Protect Your Investment: Spring Checklist

**Don't just clean the windows. Here are steps that will help you protect your home.**

### **Smoke and CO detectors**

- Change the batteries whenever it's time to change the time on the clocks, and you know they'll always work when you need them to.
- If the detectors are nearing 10 years of age, replace them.
- Homes built in recent years have hardwired detectors. If your home is older, consider purchasing smoke/CO detectors that are linked together. These work with radio transmission capability and do not require hardwiring.
- The old practice of having a plug-in CO detector is not recommended; you never know when it could become unplugged. And, since CO is often conveyed by heated air or flue gases, a ceiling or upper wall location (next to a smoke detector) works well.
- If you have electric appliances/central heat, you still should have a CO detector: Many buildings have parking garages and heating or hot water boilers that pose a risk. So have a CO detector just in case.

### **Check gutters.** Heavy ice dams cause gutters to sag. If they overflow, leakage can affect your walls.

### **Check outside drain grates** too. If you have a rooftop deck, check drains/scuppers under it. Roof scuppers often get clogged with debris; one water bottle or softball can clog a downspout and flood a roof. On larger buildings, it's especially important to look for roof heads (dome shaped strainers) on interior roof drains. These are often concealed beneath roof decks.

### **Check porches/decks** for loose, split, or warped lumber.

- In most cases, a few screws will do the trick to flatten an uneven walking surface. Consider using a square drive or "squillips" (combination square drive and Phillips) bits so you don't strip the screws.
- If guard railings are loose, this takes more than a few screws. Many times, solid blocking is needed to secure a 4"x4" post to the underlying framing. Get a professional to ensure this is done right.

### **Check sump and/or ejector pump.** Many times in winter, a sump pump will burn out because ice in the discharge piping prevented the water from flowing through.

### **Clean salt from garage floor.** Road salt is aggressive on concrete and should be thoroughly rinsed off.

### **Check outside for insect nests and animal damage.** Wintertime is when mice and other creatures burrow into houses. Little gaps can be found anywhere on an older frame house; but even on newer masonry buildings, caulk is often incomplete where freon lines, pipes, etc. exit the building.

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- Caulking:** This leak-preventer can be fixed once temperatures get above 40 degrees.
  - For new caulk to stick, old caulk should be removed. Then the surface should be cleaned.
  - Where large gaps exist, don't just waste tube after tube of caulk. Put in a foam backer rod first, so the caulk has something to adhere to. Select a backer rod that is a little bit bigger than the gap itself.
- Check garage and exterior gate locks** for safety. Heaving or settling of sidewalks, and other winter damage, can cause gates to no longer line up.

### **Some tasks that should be done every month:**

- Smoke and CO detectors:** Push test button
- Furnace:** Change the filter and check burner area for lint, etc.
- Water heater:** Put out a match or candle under the draft hood (bottom of metal chimney vent); make sure the smoke travels easily up the chimney.
- Ground fault circuit interrupter outlets:** Push test button
- Garage:** Test the overhead door's safety reverse function by placing a roll of paper towels on the floor. Then make sure the door reverses upon striking the paper towels.

### **If you haven't done these in a year, now is the time:**

- Have sewer rodded from cleanout or catch basin.
- Switch all circuit breakers off and back on.
- Clean the vent from your dryer and the dryer's internal lint path.
- If applicable, touch up paint on metal railings or "diamondplate" steps/walkways.
- Vacuum out bathroom exhaust fans. Clean kitchen exhaust fan screens.
- Replace water filters on refrigerator or under-sink piping.
- Check caulk around showers and bathtubs, especially next to the floor.

**Above all, if you're unsure about anything, talk with a professional!**



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