

# Preventive Maintenance

## FOUNDATIONS, BASEMENTS, and YARDS

- Water that strikes the house or drips down from the roof should drain away from the foundation walls. The gutter and downspout system should keep water from pooling around the foundation where it can create a moisture problem. Be sure gutters and downspouts are kept open and in good repair.
- Trim shrubs and bushes away from the foundation walls. Clearance space should be at least one foot.
- Check masonry foundation walls for cracks or weakened, crumbling mortar.
- Examine main support beams, support columns, and floor joists for evidence of bowing or warping.
- Check wood structural members, such as joists, beams, and columns, with a screwdriver or pocketknife to be sure wood is solid and free from decay.
- Check the inside and outside of all foundation walls and piers for termite tubes and damage. You may choose to have an insect-control company to do this each year.
- Check that the crawl space vapor barrier is in good condition and placed correctly. A vapor barrier is usually a polyethylene material (6-mil) that covers 70 to 100 percent of the crawl space, depending on the severity of the moisture problem.
- Examine the inside of basement walls for dampness or water stains indicating seepage or a leak.
- In most of Northern states, water lines and outside faucets need some freeze protection or winter drainage. In addition, garden hoses should be drained and stored for the winter.
- Clean leaves and debris from around an outside heating/air conditioning condenser and trim back shrubs that may block air movement around the house.
- Doorways, below grade window wells, and storm drains should be cleaned of debris or leaves.
- Driveways and walks should be checked for cracks, breaks, or erosion that may damage them. If asphalt surfaces need repairing, be certain you have the equipment and skill to do a lasting repair job. Otherwise, choose a reputable contractor. Unrepaired cracks in concrete can lead to further damage.
- A septic tank needs periodic attention. Learn how to check for sludge and scum accumulation in the tank, and have solids pumped out of the tank as needed.
- Fences, gates, and retaining walls should be checked for ease of operation, condition of structure, and materials. Make repairs as needed.

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## EXTERIOR WALLS, WINDOWS, and DOORS

- Check bricks or blocks for cracked mortar or loose joints.
- Check siding for loose or missing pieces, lifting or warping, or any sign of mildew.
- Check painted surfaces for paint failure (peeling, chipping, blistering, chalking), water damage, or mildew.
- Examine all trim for tightness of fit, damage, or decay.
- Check the condition of caulking where two different materials meet, such as where wood siding joins the foundation wall, at inside corners, and where window and door trim meets the siding.
- Check the windows for cracked or broken glass, loose putty around the glass panes, holes in screens, and evidence of moisture between pane and storm windows.
- Check that windows and doors close properly. Examine all hardware on windows and doors and lubricate moving parts.
- Check weatherstripping on windows and doors for damage and tightness of fit.
- Make sure that all window and door locks work properly. Each exterior door should have a one-inch deadbolt lock for safety.