

Annual Home Maintenance Tips



STAY ON TOP OF THESE TASKS FOR A HEALTHY HOME!

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LIVING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, WE'RE SPOILED WHEN IT COMES TO HOME MAINTENANCE—AT LEAST compared to severe climate locations. In Orange County, we don't find ourselves having to shovel snow, worry about ice dams or stress over super-sized hurricanes. However, many homeowners still neglect important maintenance around their home. At times there are issues that you can't prepare for, but it is critical to assess your home maintenance practices and be proactive for the things you can catch in time. Dedicating time to your home's up-keep will save you money, agony and inconvenience in the long run—no doubt about it.

Here is a list of suggested maintenance tasks:

Plumbing, Fixtures & Appliances

- Drain and refill your hot water heater(s). This may be necessary on a more frequent basis with the extremely hard water we have in our area, but make sure to do it at least once a year. Don't forget to inspect and test your hot water heater safety valve. The T&P valve is typically located on the top or near the top part of the water heater.
- If you have a coil-back refrigerator--you probably do--vacuum the coils at least twice each year. Your refrigerator will run much more efficiently with clean coils.
- Inspect your garage doors, rails and lock system annually; adjust and lubricate, as necessary. Consider changing your garage door opener code as a security precaution.
- Clean and sharpen your garbage disposal by running a tray of ice cubes and depositing a foaming cleaning product into the disposal once a year.
- Have your home fire extinguishers inspected to make sure they are fully charged annually.
- Once a year replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.



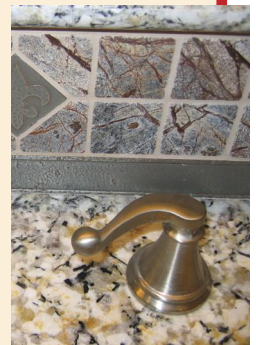
Exterior

- Inspect and clean all of your exterior vents quarterly. Make sure that air flows freely and that each has an operable damper to prevent back flow of outside air and to keep small animals from entering your home. Especially check the dryer vent to keep lint from building up.
- Clean and repair gutters. Before the rain comes, make sure gutters are free of material that could prevent free flow of water twice a year. Make sure you have splash deflectors at the base of the downspout to deflect water away from the home which could result in water intrusion, causing mold and rot.
- Inspect and adjust sprinkler systems semi-annually. Set your timers for the proper season to ensure enough, but not too much water per station.
- Trim branches and shrubs that are touching your home which can provide a pathway for bugs, small creatures or excess moisture to enter your home.



Interior

- Inspect, clean or replace kitchen vent non-charcoal hood filters quarterly.
- Check your GFCI electrical outlets (ground fault circuit interrupters) for proper operations by tripping the circuit interrupter buttons and then resetting them several times a year. If they will not trip and reset, contact your electrician for service or information on what to do.
- Twice a year it is important to inspect and repair the following caulked areas, as necessary. Making sure everything is sealed properly will prevent water leaks and regulate inside air temperature which will in turn help with the electric bill.
 - **Kitchen and bath wet areas.** Ensure that the caulked areas are not cracked and separating especially between the tub/shower walls and the tub. If they are cracked or dried out, you will need to re-seal.
 - **Bathroom/commode areas.** Check the sealant where the toilet base meets the floor to insure the sealant is intact.
 - **Window and door seals.**



Heating & Cooling Systems

- Test out your HVAC system semi-annually. If you think something might not be working properly, have a professional inspect and service your system. Don't wait until a chilly night to find out that your heating system needs work.
- Make sure to clean or replace the HVAC filters—typically located at your fresh air return, quarterly. Invest in top quality filters to remove as much of the dust, dirt and pollens from the air as possible. This helps with the indoor air quality and keeps the whole family healthier.

Many items on this list are simple and mundane, while some take a significant amount of time and effort, but all are worth taking the time to complete. If you don't take initiative, home repairs become more expensive as issues spiral out of control. This also allows you to budget for repairs and remodeling on a quarterly basis, instead of writing hefty, unexpected checks. As a homeowner, you want your biggest investment to be a money tree, not a money pit.