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EIGHT SUMMER SPRUCE-UPS FOR THE HOME

Tips to Prepare Your Home for Summer and Help Reduce Energy Costs

ST. PAUL, Minn. - July 12, 2011 – Homeowners typically know they need to ‘winterize’ the home by sealing up windows and inspecting the furnace, but it’s just as important to ‘summerize’ the home for warmer temperatures. In addition to keeping the home cool and safe for family and guests, preparing the home for summer can help reduce monthly energy bills and give you peace of mind when leaving for vacation.

“Old Man Winter can sometimes do damage to the home, so it’s important to assess the safety of your home and think about areas that may need routine maintenance work,” said Jodi Marks, former co-host of HGTV’s *Fix It Up!* and co-author of *Fix It In a Flash*, a how-to book on the basics of home repair. “Taking the necessary steps to prepare the home for warmer temperatures can also help you avoid a more costly problem down the road.”

Marks recommends tackling these eight projects to ensure your home is in shape for summer:

1. **Check your HVAC system:** The summer months are prime time for your air conditioner’s usage to increase, which may mean higher electricity bills. A professional’s assessment of your cooling system can help ensure that it runs efficiently during the warmer months. In addition to checking the coolant, they should also inspect for leaks, make sure air ducts are cleared and clean the parts inside the air handler, such as the cooling coils and blower fans.
2. **Weatherproof windows:** Properly installing weatherproofing around your doors and windows and ensuring the insulation in your attic hasn’t gotten compacted can reduce air leakage in the home and help you save on your energy bill¹. Be sure to check around the dryer vent, the kitchen exhaust hood vent and even the water bib for your garden hose. These are prime areas where cool air can escape through your walls to the outside.
3. **Change your air filters:** When sealing up the home to help keep the cool air in, keep in mind that indoor air can be two to five times worse than outdoor air². To help improve your home’s indoor air quality and keep your cooling system running efficiently, use a high performance filter, like the Filtrete Elite Allergen Reduction filter from 3M. It captures 94 percent of large airborne particles, such as pet dander, mold spores and dust mite debris, from the air passing through the filter. A good rule of thumb is to change your filter every three months and at the start of every season.
4. **Handle the hoses:** If you’re planning to leave home for a summer vacation, first check all the water hoses on your appliances, including your washing machines, toilets and sinks, to be sure the connections are in tact. Replace them immediately if there is any wear and tear. Since water hoses on your washing machine are under pressure, blowing a hose could lead to flooding the home.

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¹ Energy Star: http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing.hm_improvement_sealing

² Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/ne/communities/indoorair.html>

5. **Give your roof relief:** A large and costly roof problem can be avoided by identifying small leaks, which can occur from the effects of strong winds that push rainwater under the shingles of your roof. Just because shingles are still in place doesn't mean that there aren't tears in them that could result in leaking, so be sure to have your roof inspected by a licensed professional.
6. **Clean out the gutters:** Water left in your gutters can weigh them down until they begin to pull away from the fascia boards, which can lead to structural problems down the road. Standing water can also be a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Clean out your gutters, and make sure they slope to the downspouts. To ensure that the water drains properly, fill in low areas with soil, and slope the ground away from your home's foundation.
7. **Deck out your deck:** If your wooden deck isn't in tip-top shape, you can give it a quick facelift by tightening any loose screws and replacing loose nails with new deck screws. You should also check for any cupped, warped or splintered boards that may need to be replaced. To restore the beauty of your deck, pressure wash it with a mild detergent to remove dirt and grime, and then give it a fresh coat of stain and several coats of polyurethane to protect against nature's elements.
8. **Program the thermostat:** Utilize a programmable thermostat to help reduce energy costs during the hot summer months. You can save up to 33 percent on your heating and cooling bills each year with the Filtrete Wi-Fi Programmable Thermostat. The thermostat allows you to control your cooling costs remotely via computer, tablet or Smartphone, and also tracks your energy consumption.

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