

COLUMN FOR MAY 15, 2004.  
HEADLINE; SPRING CHECK-UP FOR HOMES

*Q; I read your column on a regular basis and you stress maintenance, do you have a seasonal check list that you use on your own home to keep it in tip top shape?*

A: I sure do, in fact I have one set up for spring and fall. It was easy for me to do, I built the home so I know its in's and out's as they say. Here is my list and it could be adapted for any home. It has saved me some expensive headaches over the years. As they say "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!"

- A) I get the dehumidifier ready for the summer; I clean the soft foam filter in the back and wash out the coils and then test run it. Maintaining a humidity level under 60% is a wise idea come summer. If humidity gets over that percentage, mildew/mould is none to set up housekeeping!
- B) We have a humidifier on our furnace and I replace the cartridge and clean it. I have slide over covers that seal off the holes so the air-conditioned air stays in the ducting.
- C) I give our exposed pipes a once over, some time ago I installed foam insulation and they work very well from an energy efficiency point of view. I slip them off at the joints and give this a look over. We have a guest bathroom that does not get used regularly; I check all of the plumbing and replace the sealants around the shower as needed.
- D) I disconnect the dryer line and vacuum it out. Ours is quite long and when we installed a gas dryer some years ago we switched to metal duct, this is code but I still check this out annually. I am not a fan of the plastic flex duct, it cuts easily and people tend to twist this duct around. I have seen them practically plugged and there are cases where this has caused a fire.
- E) We heat with oil and I get our furnace serviced every year, this will become law very soon for oil furnaces. I put the bug in the ear of my furnace technician to come in July. At that time of year most heating companies have got the bulk of the air conditioners installed and their service technicians are slow. They tend to take their time and I feel you get a better job.
- F) I test the pressure relief valve on our hot water tank. Follow the manufacturers instruction and be careful, the test may release some very hot water!
- G) I take the covers off the bathroom fans and vacuum them out; it is amazing how much stuff gets in these fans.
- H) We have an HRV for ventilation and I am capable of balancing it myself, I clean the core and the disposable filters at this time. If you have one of these and you cannot balance yourself, get this done when the furnace is serviced. It should be balanced for CFM at least once a year.
- I) Doors and windows take a beating over the winter; I check all of the hinges, lubricate the tracks and give them all a good look over for operation.
- J) I walk the exterior of our home slowly and check the siding, ours home is timber and frame with wood siding and it often needs some minor maintenance. Inspect all openings like windows and doors and any vents and screens. 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 and block up their entrances.
- K) This is a good time to trim any trees and branches before the gardens are in full bloom.
- L) I get on my roof and check for any winter damage, missing shingles and loose flashings and repair them as needed.
- M) We do not burn wood but if we did I would contact my WETT certified chimney sweep now. These professionals are always booked up by late summer so they appreciate the work in the late spring and early summer. Here again like the furnace they are not rushed and I would bet you receive a real good cleaning at this time of year. If your chimney is brick, ask your sweep to take a good look at the

condition of the bricks and the clay liner cap.

- N) Garage Doors seem to take a beating in the winter. I grease the tracks every year and use lithium spray grease on the drive chains. I 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.
- O) If your power line to the house is not underground, take a quick glance at the mast. Make sure it is weather-tight at the house and caulk as needed. If the winter has damaged the mast or it is bent, call your local utilities or your electrician. This is not a safe condition.
- P) The last thing I do is remove the cover from the air conditioner and make sure the air conditioner has not settled over the winter, air conditioners should be level. I get this serviced when the furnace is done. I check inside for any debris, one year I found a rodent nest.

This takes me about a day, some years part of another one and if any major work is found I can then schedule it as I please. Over the years this list has proven it worth.

And now the answer to last weeks "Trivia about Homes" question. Slump is the term used for testing fresh concrete. It is used as an indication of the stiffness and eventual strength of concrete. And now this weeks question. What is "shakes?", is it A) movement in assembled wood frame. B) a type of wooden shingle C) Defects found when lumber is sawn, usually caused by frost, wind or injury in harvesting. D) a name for a custom window sash. The answer in next weeks column!

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