



It's Time For Fall Maintenance

The kids are heading back to school, which means fall is just around the corner. Autumn brings falling and blowing leaves, dropping temperatures, and the knowledge that winter is not too far away. Preventative maintenance for your home now will help keep you and your family cozy during those chilly days and nights ahead and will help protect your investment in your home. Here are some things you should be working on as the days get shorter:

Check roof insulation

How much roof insulation do you have? Heat rises, so your home's most likely area to release heat is the roof. The most efficient way to stop that loss is by ceiling and roof insulation with an R-value of approximately 40. The R-value is the ability of any material to resist the passage of heat.

However, keep in mind that your home operates overall as a system. You can add 10 inches of insulation and if cold air is getting into the house in other ways (and warm air is leaving), it won't do much good. The Home Builders & Remodelers of CNY recommends for best results have your home analyzed by a professional, BPI certified company.

Other tips to ensure your "system" is working well:

Fill the gaps

Heated air also can escape from gaps that develop where building materials meet. Look for signs where building materials have pulled apart and caulk or seal the gaps. Check areas where exterior siding meets windows and doors, along the roof and foundation lines, around chimneys and where pipes protrude through walls or roofs.

Inspect heating system

Consider replacing an older or inefficient heating unit with a gas or oil furnace or a heat pump with a high efficiency rating. If you currently have an efficient system, inspect and clean it now. Be sure that your filters are clean and remember to change them monthly.

Grab a sweater

Keep your thermostat at 68 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter. Consider replacing an existing thermostat with a timer model that can turn down the heat while you sleep or when you are not at home.

Check windows

Be sure you have good storm windows and doors. If you don't, this should be a high priority for older fixtures. Also, look for any cracks around glass, sashes and window frames that could be leaking air. Apply adhesive foam weather strips to top and bottom window rails or nail felt weather stripping where window sashes and frames make contact. If you live in a home built in the last decade, you are likely to have double or triple-paned windows and low-emissivity (Low-E) glass. Both these products increase your energy efficiency and can lower your energy bills.

Clean gutters and downspouts

Even though gutters and downspouts don't affect your energy bills directly, they should be checked twice a year. Gutters and downspouts are traps for falling leaves and pine needles, and squirrels can use them as pantries for storing winter food. Be sure to clean gutters thoroughly, and pay special attention to elbows and bends in the downspouts. Keep hangers fastened securely. Plug any holes and cracks. Repaint rusting components inside and out with rustproof paint.

Most of these tips are from *The Complete Guide to Four Season Home Maintenance* by Dave Herberle and Richard M. Scutella. Look for this helpful book in your local bookstores.

Routine maintenance is important and well worth your time and effort to keep energy bills low, protect your investment, keep your family safe and protect the materials that your house is built from so they last a long time.

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