Routine Home Maintenance

Overview

As with any investment, regular maintenance and upkeep are essential to protect the value and safety of your home. Without your regular attention and maintenance, your home may experience similar issues: pest problems due to vegetation overgrowth; poor indoor air quality from dirty air filters; and even health risks due to dirty fireplaces and dryer vents that can cause house fires.

Through preventive, proactive, and incremental maintenance, you can reduce the need for big, costly replacements and new materials while prolonging the life of existing materials and systems. This card helps identify important home maintenance measures, when to perform them, and how frequently.

When is This Applicable?

Maintenance strategies have different schedules, depending on the structure or system in question, but nearly all building structures and systems need some level of maintenance.

In some cases, as noted in the table below, code requires maintenance. Many of these code-related strategies also require maintenance documentation to provide a record for future property owners and ensure consistent maintenance and operation procedures are followed. For example, the Surface Water Design Manual's Flow Control Best Management Practices (BMPs) requires maintenance and operation instructions be recorded as an attachment to the required declaration of covenant and grant of easement (Requirement 3 of Section C.1.3.3 [p. C-18]). These instructions are intended to be a minimum; DPER may require additional instructions based on site-specific conditions.

What Makes it Green?

Keeping structures strong and systems running efficiently through maintenance activities reduces the demand on natural resources. For example, maintenance can lower our impact on resources (a properly running heating system will consume less energy) and conserve virgin resources used for building (a well-maintained deck will not need to be replaced as often, reducing the consumption of lumber or other decking materials).

Furthermore, regular, preventative maintenance keeps more 'green' in your pocketbook. By performing these routines at the right time, homeowners can save money (and time!) by:

- increasing the life of equipment and materials;
- preventing potentially avoidable maintenance issues;
- protecting the health of occupants and costs associated with health issues; and
- protecting the overall investment in the structure or system.

Finally, for projects using the LEED or Built Green rating systems, both require Homeowners Manuals to encourage proper operations and maintenance of the green features within a home.

DPER GREEN SHEET NUMBER 5

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Routine Home Maintenance *continued*

Best Practices

This chart outlines different maintenance strategies and actions with a recommended schedule. The default should always be to **follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedules.**

INSIDE THE HOME

Indoor Air Quality / Health and Safety	
Check/replace batteries in CO monitors and fire alarms	Twice a year
Clean fire places and chimneys	Every Fall
Clean or replace welcome/shoe mats	Every Spring
Maintain all carpets	Vacuum weekly, clean annually
Clean main dryer vent	Annually
Inspect seal between garage and home	Twice a year
Properly dispose of unnecessary chemicals kept in the home or garage	Twice a year
Heating, Cooling and Ventilation Systems	
Check furnace filter	Check monthly, replace as necessary
Adjust thermostat for seasonal changes	At the beginning of each season
Regular air conditioner and heating system servicing	Every few years, or as suggested by the manufacturer
Make sure no leaves or debris are around outside air conditioning condenser	Each Spring and Fall
Clean in and around grills and registers; vacuum inside of ducts	Every Fall
Check the basement for moisture and air out if damp	Every season change
Check that roof/soffit vents are open and debris-free if vented	Every Fall
Vacuum ductless heat pump filters	Monthly
Clean whole house or bathroom exhaust fans covers/filters	Twice a year
Lighting	
Replace incandescent with CFL or LED if possible. Look for Energy Star certified product replacements.	As needed
Make sure time-controlled or light-sensor lighting is operating on schedule	Every Spring and Fall
Plumbing	
Immediately address any toilet or faucet leaks	As needed, check annually
Avoid frozen pipes by turning off outdoor faucets	Every Winter
Keep water heater temperature at 120F	Check every Winter and Summer
Check hot water heater for mineral buildup, drain, and refill	Every two years
Appliances	
Use power strips to reduce phantom loads from chargers, TV, etc.	Always if possible
Clean lint screen in the dryer	After each use
If replacing appliances, use only ENERGY STAR-labeled appliances	As needed
Vacuum behind and under all appliances	Annually
Interior finishes	
Inspect and /repair caulking/grout in and around showers/baths	Annually
Touch up scuffs and scratches with low- or no-VOC paint	As needed

Routine Home Maintenance *continued*

OUTSIDE THE HOME

Building Structure Exterior	
Siding: wash if needed, monitor condition of paint, spot re-paint as needed	Every Summer
Windows: wash, re-caulk if needed	Every Summer
Doors: wash, check weather stripping, re-paint as needed	Every Summer
Roof: physically (not chemically) remove moss off sloped areas, clear debris from gutters/downspouts	Every Spring and Fall
Decks and stairs: wash	Every Spring
Foundation: monitor for cracking, check vent covers, check for pests	Every Spring
Inspect roofing and flashing for signs of wear or damage and repair or replace damaged areas immediately	Every Spring and Fall
Septic Systems	
Professional septic tank inspection	Every 3 years
Pump septic tank	As often as indicated by sludge and scum levels determined by the septic professional during the inspection. According to the EPA, "If the bottom of the scum layer is within six inches of the bottom of the outlet, or if the top of the sludge layer is within 12 inches of the outlet, your tank will need to be pumped."
Raingardens	
Vegetation should be maintained as follows: 1) replace all dead vegetation as soon as possible; 2) remove fallen leaves and debris as needed; 3) remove all noxious vegetation when discovered; 4) manually weed without herbicides or pesticides; 5) during drought conditions, use mulch to prevent excess solar damage and water loss.	After major storm events: check for proper working order of the overflow system As needed: stabilize any bare areas with soil, plant materials, mulch, or landscape rock Annually: Inspect for physical defects
Infiltration / Permeable Surfaces	
To help extend the useful life of the system, the surface of the permeable pavement should be kept clean and free of leaves, debris, and sediment through regular sweeping or vacuum sweeping. Owners are responsible for the repair of all ruts, deformation, and/or broken paving units.	After major storm events: check for proper drainage; prolonged ponding or standing water is a sign the system is defective and may need replaced Annually: Inspect for physical defects

Routine Home Maintenance *continued*

OUTSIDE THE HOME *continued*

Rainwater Harvesting	
Inspect the collection area (e.g., roof) for debris and other material that could impede the entrance and/or exit of surface flows Inspect the filtering system periodically for effectiveness and replace or replenish as recommended by the manufacturer. Keep a maintenance log on site with all inspection and maintenance information and dates.	Weekly: inspect the collection area Periodically / As indicated by manufacturer: inspect the filtering system Annually between May 1st and September 30th: completely drain the storage device during the dry season in order to provide the needed capacity for an entire wet season.
Vegetated Roof	
A supplemental watering program may be needed the first year to ensure the long-term survival of the roof vegetation. Vegetation should be maintained as follows: 1) replace all dead vegetation as soon as possible; 2) remove fallen leaves and debris as needed; 3) remove all noxious vegetation when discovered; 4) manually weed without herbicides or pesticides.	After major storm events: check for proper working order of the overflow system As needed: stabilize erosion channels or bare spots with additional soil similar to the original material Annually: Inspect for physical defects
Irrigation Systems	
Make sure sprinklers do not spray areas that do not require irrigation (ex. Sidewalks, home exterior, etc.) and confirm no leaks. Time a walk-through when the system is on to perform visual check.	Inspect at the beginning of irrigation season, monitor visually and through utility bill tracking (where applicable) throughout the watering season
Landscaping	
Confirm landscaping is at least 2 feet from the home	Monitor throughout Spring and Summer
Replace landscaping mulch	Every few years
Aerate lawn/overseed/top dress with compost	Every Spring
Inspect property for proper drainage grades	Every Spring and Fall
Turn off and drain irrigation systems	Winter
Store fire wood off the ground and away from the home	Always
Avoid chemical or toxic de-icers	Winter
Do not use toxic chemicals for pest control or fertilizer	Always

Applicable References/ Standards

2009 King County Surface Water Design Manual: In particular Appendix C.

Resources

For the complete King County Green Building Handbook and individual Green Sheet PDF files, please visit our website at: http://kingcounty.gov/property/permits/publications/greenbuild.aspx. For additional information, please email dperwebinquiries@kingcounty.gov or call 206-296-6600.

See these related DPER Green Sheets (GS):

- EcoCool Remodel Tool GS Number 6
- Air Sealing Your Home, GS Number 10
- Alternative Heating Systems, GS Number 19
- Amended Soils, GS Number 1
- Duct Sealing, Green GS Number 11
- Fresh Air Ventilation, GS Number 14
- Furnace Replacement, GS Number 18
- High Efficiency Appliances, GS Number 12
- Permeable Surfaces and Driveways, GS Number 3
- Rainwater Reuse for Outdoor Uses, GS Number 2
- Right Sizing Heating/Cooling Systems, GS Number 17
- Roofing Materials, GS Number 4
- Thermostats, GS Number 16

ENERGY STAR's Heating and Cooling Maintenance Checklist

EPA's Septic Smart Home Maintenance Guide

Green Building in Rural Areas – This King County publication discusses green building for rural areas and includes a sprinkling of upkeep and maintenance tips throughout.

King County Green Cleaning Recipes and Methods and Green Cleaning Guide

National Association of Home Builder's (NAHB)'s Routine Home Maintenance Guide