

# HOME MAINTENANCE GUIDE



# CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'RE A HOMEOWNER!

Chances are, your home is the biggest investment of your life. By performing some preventive maintenance, including routine checks and repairs that improve your home's appearance and functioning, you can prevent expensive damage and save money.

## PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Preventive maintenance includes routine annual checks and repairs that improve your home's appeal and performance as well as preventing more expensive damage from occurring. Some examples of these include:

- Inspect doors and windows for unusual wear and tear. Repair and replace caulk, weather-stripping, glazing, window and door seals as needed.
- To protect against leaks and insect damage, inspect your home's roof, basement, and outside walls.
- Inspect insulation where accessible and replace any wet or damaged pieces.
- Clean leaves and other debris from gutters and down spouts.
- Have your furnace, air conditioner and hot water heater inspected, upgrading them as needed to improve energy efficiency. Replace air filters regularly.
- Thoroughly clean lint and debris that has built up in dryer ducts and behind lint screens.



Home repairs and replacements include fixing or replacing appliances, fixtures or systems in your house as they wear out through normal use.

**REPAIR OR REPLACE AN  
INEFFICIENT FURNACE,  
A/C OR WATER HEATER**

**REPAIR OR REPLACE  
LEAKING FAUCETS &  
PLUMBING**

**ROUTINELY REPLACE  
BATTERIES IN SMOKE &  
CARBON MONOXIDE  
DETECTORS**

## GREEN CLEANING

In addition, be aware that regular maintenance and green cleaning is an excellent way to maintain your family's health using natural cleansers that don't release toxic chemicals in your home. Instead of using harsh chemicals that will pollute your indoor environment, try cleaning with products you likely already have in your kitchen cabinet or refrigerator. Some examples of green cleansers you may already have in your home include:

- **Baking soda** - mild, natural abrasive that can be used to clean all surfaces without worrying about scratching surfaces.
- **White vinegar** - mildly acidic that handily removes soap scum.
- **Lemon juice** - natural bleach and disinfectant. It's a great stain remover and deodorizer.
- **Club soda** - natural stain remover that works well on fabrics without bleaching.



Making your own green cleaning products at home is easy and won't negatively impact indoor air quality like chemical based cleaners. You can also make a great cleaner for everyday jobs that is much less expensive than name brand products! Homemade green cleaning products will cost less than \$6.00 per month versus \$12.00 or more for name brand commercial cleaners.

## TRY MAKING UP SOME OF THESE NATURAL CLEANING SOLUTIONS:

### EVERYDAY GREEN CLEANER

Combine  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup white vinegar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp liquid dish soap, 1 TBS baking soda, and 2 cups warm water

### GREEN WINDOW CLEANER

Combine  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup white vinegar with 2 cups water

### LAUNDRY WHITENER

Use hydrogen peroxide or white distilled vinegar instead of chlorine bleach to whiten clothes.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

***As the seasons change, it pays to be energy efficient.*** According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the average U.S. household spends about \$1,800 per year on home energy. As a homeowner, there are several measures you can take to control, or lower, your monthly utility bills. Some of the suggestions offered below will improve the way your house uses energy; and some are ways you and your family can be more energy efficient. Be sure to check NCALL's website at [www.ncall.org](http://www.ncall.org) for more energy-saving tips.

### ***For Your Home***



Monitor your heating and cooling systems. Be sure to check and replace the filters as needed to maintain an adequate and clean air flow and in turn reduce energy costs. Keep registers and vents free of dust, dirt and other blockages. If you have rooms that are not used often, keep their registers and doors closed to avoid heating or cooling unused rooms.



Add or replace insulation. Appropriate insulation can save you up to 30 percent on your heating bill, according to the Alliance to Save Energy. Insulation of your attic, floors, exterior walls, and crawl spaces can help prevent energy loss. Be sure to choose high-quality materials, and replace matted or torn insulation to maximize its effectiveness.



Caulk or add weather stripping around windows and doors. Your home may have small openings around doors and windows that allow for heat or cool air loss. Caulk and weather stripping can reduce energy loss and protect your home from moisture damage.



Install ceiling fans. A ceiling fan will help more evenly distribute warm and cool air generated by your heat pump, furnace, or A/C unit throughout the year. Attic fans or vents can keep hot or cold air from being trapped in your attic.



If you need to buy new appliances, get the most energy efficient models you can afford. Look for household appliances that have earned the Energy Star® label - these products have met the guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency and Department Of Energy. According to the Alliance to Save Energy, households that replace existing equipment with Energy Star® qualified products can cut annual energy bills by as much as 30 percent, or more than \$450 per year.



Install storm windows and storm doors with screens for spring and summer use. Storm doors and windows can reduce energy usage by serving as a barrier to your outdoor environment.



Try not to keep the thermostat too high in winter or too low in summer. Energy experts recommend that you keep the thermostat around 78 degrees in the warm season, and 72 degrees in the cooler months. For each degree you lower your thermostat in winter you can save up to five percent on the heating portion of your energy bill, according to the Alliance to Save Energy.



Get a Free Energy Audit! Some local utility providers will conduct a free energy audit of your home. An energy audit helps identify ways to save energy and lower your utility bill by completing simple, inexpensive projects such as wrapping water heaters with insulation or sealing around plumbing pipes and fixtures.

## *For Your Family*

- Turn out lights not in use to save energy and money. This is an Easy One!
- Let Mother Nature light your home. Sunlight is often brighter than bulbs, and it's free.
- Dress appropriately for the season, so you can keep your thermostat at the lowest comfortable setting in the winter, and warmest comfortable setting in the summer.



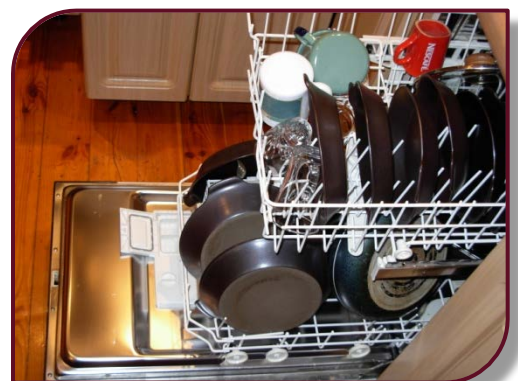
- Shut off the water when you brush your teeth, wash dishes by hand, or do other chores. Turning off the water while you brush your teeth alone can save as much as four gallons a minute, according to Water – Use It Wisely.

- Plan meals so that you can bake more than one item at a time.
- Try cooking with the lids on your pots to conserve energy used while cooking.
- Use a microwave or toaster oven to heat smaller portions, rather than a conventional oven.



- Close the refrigerator door completely to conserve energy. The refrigerator is one of the most used appliances – it runs 24 hours a day.

- Do not leave doors and windows open when the heat or air conditioning are running.
- Run your washer or dishwasher only when they are full. According to Water–Use It Wisely, doing so could save as much as 1,000 gallons of water a month per household.



## HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

A website that provides tips on cleaning, organizing and improving your home, as well as task scheduling:

[www.Brightnest.com](http://www.Brightnest.com)

Healthy homes maintenance checklist: [http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/library/hhi/Healthy\\_Housing\\_CheckList.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/library/hhi/Healthy_Housing_CheckList.pdf)

Resources for buying and maintaining an environmentally friendly home:

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/home.htm#buying>

Interactive green home solutions: <http://www.epa.gov/greenhomes/>

Learn how to do your own home energy audits: <http://energy.gov/public-services/homes/home-weatherization/home-energy-audits>

How to make your own cleaning products: <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/cleaning-organizing/how-to-make-your-own-cleaning-products>