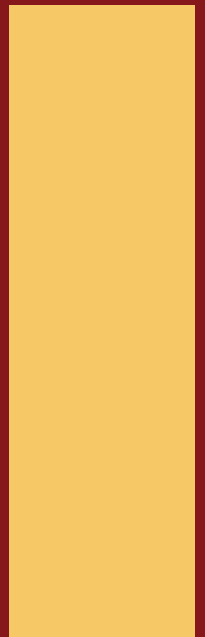


Homeowner Manual

Home

Maintenance



MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWÀ:KE



HOUSING

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

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Requires a professional



Requires an additional cost and should be budgeted for

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Manual



Welcome to Home Maintenance Manual the Homeowner Manual Series!

This manual is designed to provide practical guidance on maintaining your home.

Now that you own your home, it's essential to take the necessary steps to maintain it. Proactive maintenance helps prevent costly and unexpected repairs that can arise from neglect.

As outlined in the Table of Contents, this manual covers a range of important topics, including seasonal maintenance tasks, general cleaning tips, and links to helpful external resources.

Seasonal Home Maintenance



- Spring
 - Summer
 - Fall
 - Winter
 - Winterization
-

SPRING

1. Check Caulking

Starting in spring, you should be checking your caulking every month until the fall. Starting in the spring allows you to monitor if any water came in during the winter and if spring rainfall is causing buildup of water anywhere.

2. Test Sump Pump

Ideally you should be checking your sump pump regularly, however every spring and fall you should test the sump pump.

This includes a preliminary visual inspection then filling up the sump pit with water and observing its pump activation and drainage. This is also a good time to test the sump pump's alarm system and battery backup.

Testing a sump pump bi-annually to ensure it functions properly helps prevent floods in your home.

3. Check Exterior Drainage

As time passes, dirt settles and can cause dips near house foundations which in turn can lead to cracks, leaks and mold.

Walk the perimeter of your house and look for depressions near the foundations.

If you notice any depressions, fill with soil and redirect the water away from the house.

If you notice mold anywhere in your house, contact KSCS Environmental Health Services, they will be able to remove the mold in your home as well as test your water and gases.



SUMMER

1. Cut Grass & Weed Lawn

Cutting your grass weekly and regularly weeding your yard are essential parts of maintaining a healthy and attractive landscape. Keeping your lawn trimmed not only improves curb appeal but also encourages thicker, healthier grass growth by preventing weeds from taking over. Regular weeding helps eliminate invasive plants that compete with your lawn and garden for nutrients, water, and sunlight. A well-maintained yard reflects pride of ownership, can increase property value, and prevents small issues from turning into larger landscaping problems down the line.

2. Pool Maintenance

If you own a pool, it's important to stay on top of pool maintenance while your pool is open. If you are not a pool owner and are considering purchasing one, note that maintenance is crucial for avoiding costly repairs that would require hiring a pool professional.

Maintaining your pool includes, cleaning it regularly of leaves, vacuuming dirt from the bottom, cleaning out the skimmer, flushing out the pump, adding chlorine or salt as needed.

Your pool should have a fence around it for safety reasons. Be sure the fence is well installed and if it is in need of repair, do so before opening your pool.

3. Stay up to Date on Monthly Tasks

There are a series of monthly tasks you need to stay up to date on during the summer as well that are not specific to the summer months.

Our 'Homeowner Checklist' is an excellent resource to use alongside this manual to ensure you are staying up to date with your home maintenance and can log when you last did certain tasks.



FALL

1. Clean & Repair Patio/Deck

Inspect your patio/deck to assess whether or not it requires any repairs. Try to plan these repairs to be done for this fall if possible.

If you have any outdoor furniture, wrap them in a tarp or store them in a shed or garage.

Pay special attention to the railings on decks and porches as they are prone to rust/rot. Test whether they are sturdy by attempting to shake them, if they move a lot, it requires repairs, if it barely moves then you can conclude it is sturdy.

2. Inspect for Insects & Animals

Inspect your home, both interior and exterior, for signs of entry near ducts, utility lines, near the roofline, and near basement windows.

There are several signs to look out for:

- Rodent or other animal droppings
- Dislodged or fallen insulation
- Bite marks on wood from insects
- Holes in food packages
- Accumulation of outdoor debris (possible nest)

3. Test Sump Pump

Ideally you should be checking your sump pump regularly, however every spring and fall you should test the sump pump.

This includes a preliminary visual inspection then filling up the sump pit with water and observing its pump activation and drainage. This is also a good time to test the sump pump's alarm system and battery backup.

Testing a sump pump annually to ensure it functions properly helps prevent floods in your home.

For step-by-step directions look at [Plumbing Lab](#)¹

4. Clean Chimney

As part of winterization, you should be cleaning your gutters and checking your roof. At the same time if you have a chimney, now is the ideal time to clean out any debris from trees and ensure there is nothing blocking smoke from exiting.

FALL

5. Remove & Store Air Conditioner

If you have a removeable air conditioner, you are able to disconnect and clean it before storing it inside.

If you have central air, ensure that you protect the top of the air compressor with a piece of plywood to protect it from falling icicles.

6. Close Pool

If you have a pool, be sure to contact your pool professional to close your pool. This often includes draining the pool substantially, adding protective cover and turning off the pool pump.

Although many people choose to close their pools themselves, we advise you to contact a professional if you are unfamiliar with the process.

7. Weather Stripping

As it gets colder, you should install weather stripping to your exterior doors and windows.

This prevents drafts which in turn reduces cost of heating. It can also prevent leaks; however, leaks can still occur if your caulking is insufficient.

WINTER

1. Check for Icicles and Ice Buildup

Icicles and ice buildup is very common during our Quebec winters. To ensure the safety of yourself and others and to avoid causing any damage, clean away any icicles or ice buildup in gutters and downspouts.

2. Shovel Frequently

With significant snowfalls, homeowners should do their best to stay on top of snow removal.

This allows for your house to be accessible in case of emergencies and prevents wear and tear to driveways and walkways.

When shoveling you should pile the snow away from the house and be sure to clear window wells if you notice substantial snow in those areas.

Decks are also prone to rotting and sinking if the snow piles up and becomes too heavy.

If you are incapable of shoveling yourself, you may be able to hire a plow or an individual to take care of your walkways.

3. Salt Driveways & Walkways

After shoveling, sprinkle salt to melt any ice buildup including black ice. This can be used as a preventative measure or a reactionary measure to icy conditions.

Note that certain salts are not safe for pets and it may damage certain organic materials. To find the right method for you, consider the material used for your driveway and walkways.

There are alternatives to salt and if you would like to learn more look at [Almanac](#)²

4. Install Driveway Markers

Driveway markers can be used year-round, but they are typically used during the winter to indicate where your driveway is in regard to the snowbanks.

This helps snowplows see where your driveway is and acts as a good reference if you are shoveling/plowing your driveway yourself.

This can avoid significant damage to your vehicles and lawn.

WINTERIZATION

1. Inspect & Repair your Roof



Regular roof maintenance is essential to prevent leaks and costly repairs. Start by inspecting your roof for any loose, cracked, or missing shingles. If you find loose shingles, use roof adhesive to temporarily reattach them and prevent further damage.

Check around exhaust vents, chimneys, and other roof fixtures to ensure no water is entering. It's also beneficial to inspect your attic for signs of leaks, such as damp spots or water stains. Significant shingle damage, such as curling, usually requires professional attention to assess any underlying damage to the roofing materials.

Additionally, remove debris, check for moss or algae growth, and maintain clean gutters and downspouts to avoid water buildup. Taking these steps will help extend your roof's lifespan and protect your home from water damage.

2. Turn off Exterior Faucets

As it starts to get colder and the water begins to freeze, it is important to turn off any and all exterior faucets.

At this point it is suggested that you empty your outdoor hoses and disconnect them to store them in the shed or garage.

This includes all hoses and sprinklers.

If you do not have an off valve, it is essential that you install one to avoid leaks and your pipes freezing and busting over the winter.

3. Check Caulking

As mentioned in the 'Spring' section on page 5, you should start checking your caulking in the spring as the snow is melting and we start to experience frequent rainfall.

It is also crucial that you check your caulking around doors, windows and chimneys as a way to winterize your home.

If you notice any cracks, peeling or gaps that require your attention be sure to remove the old caulking, clean the area, and apply new caulking.

For a step-by-step tutorial and general dos and don'ts see [Bob Vila³](#)

4. Clean Gutters

Although you should be keeping an eye on your gutters year-round, it is most important to clean them during the fall to remove any debris from fallen leaves, dirt, etc.

You are able to clean your gutters yourself, however we advise you to do so safely with the appropriate equipment.

Downspouts may need to be removed before the first snowfall as they can break and/or cause water buildup in your gutters.

If your gutters are neglected, it may cause trees and other vegetation to grow which can result in significant property damage.

General Home Maintenance



GENERAL HOME MAINTENANCE

1. Service Furnace Professionally

Every year, a professional should be hired to inspect your furnace to make sure everything is working smoothly.

Be sure to do your research and call around for quotes to determine what a reasonable price would be for this service.

2. Service Fire Extinguishers Professionally

Every year, your fire extinguishers need to be serviced by professionals.

You can bring your fire extinguishers to the local fire department, a certified fire equipment service company or fire protection service providers.

This makes sure they are fully charged and maintained properly.

Note: fire extinguishers should be replaced or emptied and refilled every 6 years, hydrostatic testing every 12 years and inspected by the homeowner monthly. *Read more in the Safety & Emergencies Manual*

3. Trim Trees

Maintaining your land is a year-round responsibility every homeowner has. For those with large trees on their property, trimming your trees will significantly reduce the chances of damage to your roof and gutters.

Note the proximity of trees to your home, as the roots can grow into your foundation causing cracks.

Trees should be trimmed annually; the time of year depends on the type of tree and whether or not the tree is creating damage to the house's infrastructure.

If you are noticing that a tree is causing damage to your home, or that the tree has dead limbs, be sure to trim them off.

Check on trees surrounding your home after a big storm to see if the trees are at risk of falling or if they have dropped big branches.

This may require a professional, especially if you are cutting large branches or if there is a risk of the tree falling in the process.

4. Inspect, Repair & Replace Screens

Screens should be inspected once every year.

Damaged screens should be fixed or replaced as soon as possible as it may allow bugs and animals into your home if not taken care of right away.

Most windows are standard in size, however if your window is not, you may need to order a custom screen.

Try and avoid placing blankets and pillows in the windows to block out light, this can damage the screens, cause mold and/or hide any issues with your windows.

Blocking the windows will also limit your air circulation if you are not using heating or AC.

Consider installing markers or netting on the outside of your window to prevent birds from flying into the glass.

GENERAL HOME MAINTENANCE

5. Check Light Switches & Plugs

Test all of your light switches and plugs to ensure your electrical connections are working properly.

If you notice that a light switch or plug is not working, contact a professional.

Note: Insurance will NOT cover electrical damage if an unlicensed person was hired.

6. Tighten Handles & Fixtures

Once a year, go through your house and check all the door handles/knobs on cupboards and doors.

If you notice that any are loose, use a screwdriver to tighten them.

7. Check Locks on Windows & Doors

Check all the locks on your windows and doors annually to ensure they are working properly.

Use a silicon-based oil on the mechanisms if you are noticing difficulty using them.

You may need to replace locks if you notice significant wear and tear, although this is rare.

8. Check Caulking on Tubs & Showers

Check the caulking on your tubs and showers for signs of wear and water damage.

If you are missing caulking in certain areas, or water has gotten underneath it, it will cause mold to grow.

Replace the caulking if needed in order to protect the walls and subfloor.

Ensure that the caulking is mildew resistant and you are following the necessary steps.

See [Bob Vila](#)⁴ for a step-by-step tutorial on how to refresh the caulking in your tub/shower.

9. Inspect Grout in Bathroom & Kitchen

Similarly to your caulking, the grout in your bathrooms and kitchen need to be checked regularly.

Check for signs of moisture and any damaged areas that can be a safety issue.

Example: if your tiles move when you walk on them, if they are lifted, etc.

Call a professional to fix the grout if needed.

Be sure to do your research and get multiple quotes to ensure you are being cost efficient.

10. Check All Pipes for Drips

Look for signs of dampness or mold near pipes.

Call a professional to make any necessary repairs.

Be sure to do your research and get multiple quotes for all repairs.

GENERAL HOME MAINTENANCE

11. Flush Hot Water

The pressure release valve on a hot water tank should be tested and flushed once a year.

This can be done by the homeowner.

Be sure to turn off the power to the hot water tank before flushing it.

See [Home Depot](#)⁵ for a step-by-step guide on how to flush your hot water tank.

12. Installations

Many homeowners may opt to install internet, security systems or AC units in their home. As a homeowner you cannot rely on installation companies to properly fill/repair any necessary holes they make to complete the installation.

After the install, be sure to check the property for holes and properly fill them with the appropriate materials to avoid leaks, animals and pests and drafts.

If you install something yourself, be sure to avoid pipes, wires, etc during the installation as damage to these areas can cause substantial property damage and is a safety hazard.

13. Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors

As a homeowner, you must have smoke detectors on every floor and outside of every bedroom.

Please see Book 5 - Safety and Emergencies for more details about placement.

Carbon monoxide detectors should also be on every floor near bedrooms.

Be sure to change the batteries roughly every 6 months.

DO NOT remove the batteries without replacing them and DO NOT remove these detectors from your home.

14. Inspect Attic

In addition to inspecting your roof and gutters, you should also check your attic for moisture or signs of animals and pests.

Chances are, if you have an issue with your roof, it can cause damage in your attic.

Take precautions when inspecting the attic as they are not typically made to walk in and a misstep can cause damage to the ceiling below.

If you detect moisture, mold, animal presence, etc, you may need to make repairs to the infrastructures and/or replace the insulation.

Cleaning



- Appliances
 - Outdoor Maintenance
 - Plumbing
 - Ventilation
 - Miscellaneous
-

APPLIANCES

1. Clean Kitchen Stove Hood

Your kitchen is a high traffic area that gets a lot of use, especially your stove. Every month you should take the time to properly clean your stove hood to prevent a house fire from the accumulation of grease, improve the air quality in your home, optimize the efficiency of your stove hood and to extend its life span.

Maintaining appliances regularly can help avoid costly repairs or the need for replacement.

In addition to wiping down the exterior of the appliance, the grates and filters should be soaking in soapy water to help remove any buildup.

Depending on how much buildup there is, you may need to scrub the filters.

For more info see [Marth Stewart](#)⁶ for a step-by-step guide.

2. Clean Kitchen Sink Disposal

Many homes do not have garbage disposals in their kitchen sinks, but for those that do it is important to make sure that it is cleaned on a monthly basis.

Cleaning your sink disposal can help get rid of the accumulation of food, grease and bacteria which can hinder the efficacy of the disposal and cause foul odors.

Homeowners should also be aware of what can and cannot be put in a sink disposal.

See [Bob Vila](#)⁷ to know what cannot be put in a sink disposal and [This Old House](#)⁸ to see how to clean the disposal.

****NOTE: If you do not have a sink disposal NOTHING should go down the drain besides water and soap****

3. Clean Refrigerator/Freezer

Twice per year the bottom and front of your fridge should be vacuumed. You may need to do this more frequently if you have pets.

This improves the efficiency of the fridge and extends its lifespan.

At the same time, you should take everything out of your fridge and freezer, being sure to throw away anything that is expired or has gone bad.

Be sure to wipe out the interior and exterior of the fridge to ensure it is clean before putting your food back in.

See [Gizmo Cleaning](#)⁹ for a guide on how to vacuum your fridge.

If your fridge has a water dispenser or automatic ice maker, be sure to change the water filter every 6 months.

4. Clean Washing Machine

A good rule of thumb for cleaning appliances is this: if the appliance isn't clean, it can't effectively clean anything else.

Every month your washer should be cleaned thoroughly. Some machines have a self-cleaning cycle whereas older machines may not.

See [Good Housekeeping](#)¹⁰ for a step-by-step guide on how to clean your washing machine.

APPLIANCES

5. Dryer Lint Filter

In addition to your washing machine, your lint filter in your drying machine should be cleaned regularly to prevent fires and to ensure your machine is working efficiently.

To create good habits, cleaning the lint filter after every cycle will ensure there is no unnecessary buildup.

Every month you should remove the lint filter and see if any lint is stuck in the dryer. The lint filter is not always the most efficient at catching all the lint and you may need to vacuum it out as well as rinse the filter itself.

6. Clean Exhaust Hose

Inspect your dryer exhaust hose and outdoor duct cover twice annually then clean the pieces to ensure the pieces are functionally properly.

These pieces remove the hot and moist air from your dryer, expelling it outside. Keeping this pathway clean prevents mold and mildew and prevent fires.

If your exhaust hose is not already a rigid metal pipe, look into changing it out for one.

OUTDOOR MAINTENANCE

1. Clean Chimney

As part of winterization, you should be cleaning your gutters and checking your roof. At the same time if you have a chimney, now is the ideal time to clean out any debris from trees and ensure there is nothing blocking smoke from exiting.

2. Clean Gutters

Although you should be keeping an eye on your gutters year-round, it is most important to clean them during the fall to remove any debris from fallen leaves, dirt, etc.

You are able to clean your gutters yourself, however we advise you to do so safely with the appropriate equipment.

Downspouts may need to be removed before the first snowfall as they can break and/or cause water buildup in your gutters.

If your gutters are neglected, it may cause trees and other vegetation to grow which can result in significant property damage.

3. Clean Basement Window Wells

Each season (at least 4 times a year) you should inspect your window wells and clean them of any debris.

In fall this could look like a lot of leaves and branches, whereas in the winter there can be a buildup of snow that needs to be cleared out.

Also check the drainage of the window well as excess water can cause mold, damage the foundation and cause flooding in the basement.

PLUMBING

1. Clean Showerheads

Showerheads should be cleaned weekly to limit hardwater and/or mineral buildup. Every year, showerheads should be soaked in CLR on top of weekly cleaning to remove buildup in the individual holes and to tackle more stubborn buildup. If you are able, remove the showerhead and soak it in a bowl of CLR. If not, fill a plastic bag large enough to fit your showerhead with CLR and tie the bag around the shower to soak it.

2. Clean Backwater Valves

To prevent sewage from flowing back into your home, be sure to clean the flapper and valve seat then test with water to ensure everything is working properly.

This should be done twice annually.

If you find any damage, be sure to contact a plumber to assess the situation.

3. Clean Sink Aerators

Each sink in your home should have an aerator attached to it. These ensure that air mixes with the water allowing for a steady stream.

It is very common for calcium and hardwater to build up on these pieces. Wiping them down every week can help reduce the amount of buildup, however you may want to soak this piece in vinegar or a stronger cleaner such as CLR. Be sure to rinse the aerator with water before using again.

4. Drains & Water Stoppers

It is good practice to limit debris that goes down your drains in both the bathrooms and kitchen; however, buildup still happens.

Clean your drains every month or when you start to notice slow drainage.

You can use boiling water, vinegar and baking soda to clean your drains; however, some situations may require you to use a stronger solution like Drano.

Water stoppers in your sink and tub should be wiped down on a weekly basis to prevent buildup. It may require you to unscrew them to clean them properly.

VENTILATION

1. Change Air Filters

Every month you should change all your air filters in your home.

Air filters can be found the return air grille, inside the air handler, and/or near the furnace or air conditioning system.

Be sure to factor in the cost of replacing them monthly as it is essential to ensuring the air quality of your home, prolonging the life of your HVAC system and overall maintaining the efficiency of the HVAC system.

2. Clean Air Conditioning

Air conditioners should be cleaned every 2 months if in use. Air conditions have their own filters that need to be cleaned out as pollen, dust and dirt can get trapped in the filter reducing the efficiency of the air conditioner.

Not cleaning the air conditioner can lead to it pulling more energy which can raise your energy costs.

3. Vacuum Air Vents & Ducts

Every 3 months all air intakes and ducts need to be vacuumed and cleaned to reduce allergens and ensure the efficiency of the ventilation system.

Doing this will alert you to any moisture issues that need to be dealt with.

Afterwards you can test the airflow by using a tissue to see if intake systems are pulling in air and if vents are pushing out air.

4. Clean Chimney

Check page 18 for details.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Clean & Inspect Basement

Clean basement of clutter and look for signs of water that may result in mold and mildew.

If mold or mildew is present, locate the water source and repair it. Also be sure that you are using the correct methods to cleaning mold; it cannot simply be painted over.

2. Clean Garage & Storage Areas

If you have a garage and/or storage spaces, be sure to clean it regularly and check for signs of mold and mildew as well as signs that rodents or pests have entered.

3. Garbage, Recycling & Compost

Take note the scheduled dates for waste pickup in your neighborhood. Make it a habit to place your garbage, recycling and compost on the appropriate days.

This limits the waste buildup in and around your home and helps prevent animals from digging in your trash.

4. Dealing with Mold

Small and medium mold areas can be cleaned by homeowners using several different methods, however large mold areas need to be handled professionally.

Large areas are greater than 3m².

Use baking soda + water OR unscented soap + warm water to clean mold. Be sure to completely dry the area afterwards.

Only non-porous surfaces can be cleaned of mold; porous items would need to be discarded.

Mold is preventable by keeping the house's humidity between 30-50%, using the bathroom and kitchen fans and repair any leaks.

Mold can grow on any surface/object and can cause serious health issues.

Best practice is to take care of mold as soon as you notice it.

[KSCS Environmental Health Services¹¹](#) has more information on mold and offers services to remove mold from your home if need be.

External Resources

Scan the QR code below to see the full list of online resources mentioned in this manual!



Niá:wen! Thank you!

