



October 2009

Tips for Fall Home Maintenance & Safety

Ah yes, the weather is finally cooperating and allowing us to get back outdoors to enjoy what Arizona has to offer. As our hot temperatures change to cooler temperatures, so there are changes we should make in and around our homes. This month I suggest you consider the following for the safety and efficiency of your home.

Sprinkler Maintenance

As the temperatures go down, so does the need to water the plant material around your home--so remember to adjust the automatic sprinkler timers accordingly. Often times when inspecting a home's sprinkler system I find missing heads or sub-soil leaks that cause a significant amount of wasted water.

I also see that many homeowners run their sprinkler systems late at night or in the early morning hours, therefore these leaks may go unnoticed for long periods of time. So, in addition to reducing the time each circuit runs, run each circuit for 15 minutes, check each of the heads and look for wet spots that may indicate sub-soil leaks.

Take Advantage of the Sun

Remember, we are entering the time of the year when the sun is our friend and we want to use its energy to reduce the heating load on our gas or electric heaters. If you have sun screens on your windows, now is the time you want to remove them to allow the sun to warm these rooms to take advantage of this free energy. It is also a good time to wash the windows as a dirty window can block up to 20% of the sun's energy from entering the room.

Don't Let Heat Escape

If you have those round turbines up on your roof that improve attic ventilation, seal them off for the cooler months. Some manufacturers offer a damper door that you can shut or a pin that will stop the turbine from turning. The best solution is to cover the turbine to prevent the heat from the attic from escaping. Again, the idea is to allow the sun's energy to heat the attic, reducing the load on your heater.

Remove Humidity From Your Home

As the outside temperatures cool we may have a tendency to not open a window or turn on the exhaust fan when taking a shower. However, warm air holds much more moisture than cool air. When we take a shower we warm the air and dramatically increase the humidity of that air. When this air cools, it releases the moisture (you can see it on the mirror). This can lead to ideal conditions for mold growth this time of year as these rooms rapidly cool after the shower.

Always open a window or turn on the exhaust fan when taking a shower and let the exhaust fan run a few minutes after the shower to quickly remove the humid air from the bathroom. This also goes for laundry rooms.

Check Your Smoke Detectors

Many house fires tend to occur this time of the year. Did you know the typical useful life of a smoke detector is ten years? Smoke detector manufacturers are required to tell you what the useful life of their product is.

Look for this information on the sticker or in the pamphlet that came with the smoke detector. If your smoke detectors are more than ten years old, see if you can identify the manufacturer and model number and do some research on the Internet to determine the useful life of this product. Consider replacing out-dated smoke detectors.

An Ounce of Prevention . . .

Take this opportunity to do a bit of maintenance now and you'll not only reduce your energy use, but increase the comfort and safety of your home, as well!

Rich Schaefer of AccuPro Inspection Services, LLC has over 35 years of experience in Arizona construction, ten years as a certified home inspector and is also a certified energy auditor. If you would like to know more about Rich Schaefer, home inspections, commercial property inspections, construction inspections, mold inspections and testing, energy audits, or to review past issues of AccuPro Insight, please go to www.AccuProINSPECT.com.

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