

Springtime is here and it's time to assess the toll winter weather may have taken on your home. The American Society of Home Inspectors, compiled this checklist to help you target the key areas that need attention.

1-Examine roof shingles to see if any were lost or damaged during winter. If your home has an older roof, you may want to start a budget for a replacement. The summer sun takes a toll on roof shingles. Shingles that are cracked, buckled, loose, or are missing granules need to be replaced. The flashing around plumbing vents, skylights and chimneys needs to be checked and repaired by a qualified roofer.

2-Probe wood trim. Use a screwdriver to probe the wood trim around windows, doors, railings and decks. Make repairs now before the spring rains do more damage to the exposed wood.

3-Check the gutters for loose or leaky areas. Improper drainage can lead to water in the crawl space. Make sure downspouts drain away from the foundation and are clear and free of debris.

4-Determine flood vulnerable areas. Low areas in the yard or next to the foundation should be filled in with compacted soil. Spring rains can cause yard flooding, which can lead to foundation flooding and water damage. Also, when water pools in these low areas in summer, it creates a breeding ground for insects.

5-Examine the exterior of the chimney for signs of damage. Have the flue cleaned and inspected by a certified chimney sweep.

6-Inspect concrete slabs for signs of cracks or movement. All exterior slabs except pool decks should drain away from the home's foundation. Fill cracks with a concrete crack filler or silicone caulk. When weather permits, power-wash and then seal the concrete.

7-Properly store your firewood. Firewood should be stored at least 18 inches off the ground at least 2 feet from the structure.

8-Check outside hose faucets for freeze damage. Turn the water on and place your thumb or finger over the opening. If you can stop the flow of water, it is likely the pipe inside the home is damaged and will need to be replaced. While you're at it, check the garden hose for dry rot.

9-Service your air conditioning unit. Have a qualified heating and cooling contractor clean and service the air conditioning system. Clean coils operate more efficiently, and an annual service call will keep the system working at peak performance levels. Change interior filters on a regular basis.

10-Check your gas and battery-powered lawn equipment to make sure it is ready for summer use. Clean equipment and sharp cutting blades will make yard work easier.