



**City of Phoenix**

Investing in Your Home, Your Neighborhood, Your Community

# Health, Safety & Home Maintenance Guide



SAVING YOU MONEY ON YOUR WATER AND ELECTRIC BILL

PRESERVING YOUR HOME AND YOUR INVESTMENT  
FOR NOW AND FOR YOUR FUTURE



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## Introduction

An element of homeownership responsibility is maintaining your home, **'your investment'**. To help you with this, the City of Phoenix Neighborhood Services Department has created this Health, Safety and Home Maintenance guide with easy-to-use tips to assist you in preserving the lifespan of your home's interior and exterior structure, and major and minor fixtures.

Evidence shows a well-maintained home that is kept dry, pest free, clean, well ventilated, and in good repair contributes to good health and a safer environment for the entire family. There are good reasons to place home maintenance on the top of your list as it can reduce injury from accidents, reduce allergens, prevent illness and doctor visits, and minimize costly repairs.

**DISCLAIMER:** This guide is not intended for you to use as a substitute for handling all of your home maintenance and repair needs; your larger home maintenance repairs; or manufacture requirements and guidelines. The reference guide provides easy-to-use tips for keeping your home healthy, safe and well maintained on a regular basis.

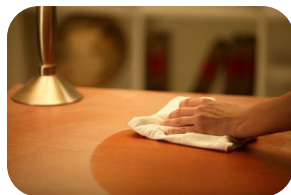
We hope you find this guide helpful.

## 7 Healthy Home Principles



### *Keep it Dry*

A damp home provides a nurturing environment for mold, mites, roaches and rodents, so prevent water from entering into your home through leaks in roofing systems or due to poor drainage around the outside of your home. Make sure to check all your interior plumbing for any leaks.



### *Clean Home*

Cleaning your home on a regular basis controls the source of dust and contaminants. A clean home reduces pest infestation and other infectious agents from entering into your home. Reducing clutter including objects left on the floor also provides a healthier and safer environment for your family.

**THINK  
SAFETY  
FIRST**

*Safety*

Fire safety and fire prevention are life saving measures. Always keep ALL smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in good working order and keep fire extinguishers on hand. Also, always keep poisons, cleaning solutions and matches out of the reach of children.



*Well Ventilated*

Always keep kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms well ventilated and damp free. Studies show that increasing fresh air supply in a home reduces the concentration of contaminants and mold while improving respiratory health for the entire family. Wet or damp clothes and areas can contribute to mold and deterioration of surfaces.



*Good Riddance*

All pests look for food, water and shelter. You won't see some pests until your home is completely infested. To be pest-free, seal cracks and openings throughout your home, store food in pest-resistant containers and if needed, use sticky-traps and baits in areas not accessible to children or pets. Studies show that children exposed to roaches and rodents pose a higher risk with episodes of asthma.



*Keep it Contaminant Free*

Reduce lead-related hazards in pre-1978 homes by fixing deteriorated paint, and keeping floors and window areas clean using a wet-cleaning approach. Test your home for radon, a naturally occurring dangerous gas that enters homes through soil, crawlspaces, and foundation cracks. Install a radon removal system if levels above the EPA action-level are detected.



*Keeping it Together*

Routinely inspect, clean and make repairs to your home. Taking care of minor repairs immediately along with good home and yard maintenance, will help keep you from unexpected and costly repairs.

## Seasonal Maintenance Checklist



### Fall

- Yard & Exterior:**
  - No trip, fall, choking, sharp, edge hazards
  - Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites
  - Drain outdoor faucets and hoses
  - Clean window wells and check weep hole drainage
  - Clean gutters and downspouts
  - Trim tree limbs a minimum of 6 feet away from roof areas (Prevents roof access to rodents)
- Exterior Roof, Walls & Windows:**
  - Inspect the roof and roof vents
  - Check attic vents
  - Repair broken, cracked glass
  - Clean dryer vent system
  - Check exhaust ducts are clear
  - Inspect weather stripping on all doors
- Plumbing, Fixtures, & Appliances:**
  - Check hot water heater for leaks
  - Check water meter for leaks
  - Check drain and supply line for leaks
  - Check bath and kitchen fans operation
  - Clean aerators on faucets and shower heads
  - Clean outdoor air intakes and screens
  - Clean and tune furnaces, and hot water heaters
  - Clean and tune oven ranges
  - Inspect dryer vent for lint and debris
  - Dust or vacuum ceiling fan blades
- HVAC Equipment—Replace Filters: Every 30-60 Days**
  - Visually inspect air conditioner
  - Warm air furnace/heat pump
  - Outdoor air to return to heat recovery ventilation
  - Clear debris around outdoor condensing unit
- Electrical Equipment:**
  - Check for damaged cords
  - Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
  - Test GFCI receptacles
- Garage:**
  - Ensure proper storage of fuel cans and other combustibles



### Winter

- Yard and Exterior:**
  - Clean gutters and downspouts
  - Check outside faucets and hoses for leaks
  - Flush irrigation system/check timers
- Exterior Roof, Walls & Windows:**
  - Examine and repair caulking of the windows, stucco, and trim
  - Gently clean window screens
- Interior Walls, Ceilings, Windows & Doors:**
  - Inspect caulking
- Plumbing, Fixtures, & Appliances:**
  - Clean aerators on faucets and shower heads
  - Perform water heater maintenance
  - Clean inside surface of water heater floor
  - Clean exhaust fan outlets and screens
  - Clean refrigerator coils
  - Clean dryer vents and screens
  - Inspect washing machine hoses (replace every 3 yrs.)
  - Close fireplace damper if not in use
  - Change rotation of ceiling fan blades to circulate air upwards
  - Dust or vacuum ceiling fan blades
- HVAC Equipment—Replace Filters: Every 30-60 Days**
  - Rinse off air conditioning compressor unit coil
  - Clear debris around outdoor condensing unit
- Electrical Equipment:**
  - Replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
  - Test GFCI receptacles
- Garage:**
  - Lubricate garage door roller shafts
  - Tighten garage door bolts



## Spring

- Yard and Exterior:**
  - Water drains away from house
  - Check plant and tree drip system for breaks and clogs
  - No trip, fall, choking, sharp, edge hazards
  - Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites
  - Clean window wells and check weep-hole drainage
  - Clean gutters and downspouts
  - Check flush irrigation system/timers
- Exterior Roof, Walls & Windows:**
  - Visually inspect shingles
  - Visually inspect chimney, valley, plumbing vents, and flashing
  - Make sure gutters discharge water away from building
  - Check attic for signs of roof leaks
  - Look for peeling paint
  - Look for signs of leaks where deck attaches to house
  - Check below window & door that flashing is intact
  - Look for signs of leaks at window and door sills
  - Clean dryer vent system
  - Check exhaust ducts are clear
- Interior Walls, Ceilings, Windows & Doors:**
  - Check operation of windows and doors
- Plumbing, Fixtures, & Appliances:**
  - Check drain and supply line for leaks
  - Check bath and kitchen fan operation
  - Clean aerators on faucets and shower heads
  - Clean exhaust fan outlets and screens
  - Dust or vacuum ceiling fan blades
- HVAC Equipment—Replace Filters: Every 30-60 Days**
  - Visually inspect air conditioner
  - Warm air furnace/heat pump
  - Clean air conditioning coils, drain pans
  - Clear debris around outdoor condensing unit
- Electrical Equipment:**
  - Check for damaged cords
  - Test GFCI receptacles
  - Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Garage:**
  - Ensure proper storage of fuel cans and combustibles
  - Proper operation of garage door and safety shut-off



## Summer

- Yard and Exterior:**
  - Trim trees and shrubs away from home
  - Clean gutters and downspouts
  - Check irrigation system/timers
  - Trim tree limbs a minimum of 6 feet away from roof areas (Prevents roof access to rodents)
- Exterior Roof, Walls & Windows:**
  - Visually examine roof for loose, cracked or missing shingles
  - Examine and repair caulking of the windows, stucco, and trim
  - Look for peeling paint
  - Examine and repair weather stripping on exterior doors and windows
- Interior Walls, Ceilings, Windows & Doors:**
  - Check operation of windows and doors
  - Inspect caulking
  - Close the chimney damper
  - Clean or wax cabinets to protect the finish
  - Lubricate and adjust locks, hinges and latches
  - Examine window locks
  - Change rotation of ceiling fan blades to circulate air downwards
  - Remove dust, cob webs, dead bugs, etc.
- Plumbing, Fixtures, & Appliances:**
  - Clean dryer vent duct and damper to remove lint
  - Clean aerators on faucets and shower heads
  - Clean exhaust fan outlets and screens
  - Close fire place damper
  - Gently clean window screens
  - Dust or vacuum ceiling fan blades
  - Change rotation of ceiling fan blades to circulate air downwards
- HVAC Equipment—Replace Filters: Every 30-60 Days**
  - Visually inspect air conditioner/furnace/heat pump
  - Air conditioner cleaned and serviced by qualified technician
  - Clear debris around outdoor condensing unit
- Electrical Equipment:**
  - Check for damaged cords
  - Test GFCI receptacles
  - Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Garage:**
  - Lubricate garage door roller shafts
  - Tighten garage door bolts

## 28 Home Maintenance Strategies



### *Bath Tubs and Showers*

Due to daily use, water and steam exposure, bath tubs and showers are vulnerable to mold growth. Be sure to keep your bathrooms well ventilated, especially after a shower and inspect tub/shower caulking (sealant) for mold stains. Caulking around tubs, showers and plumbing fixtures has a 2 to 3 year lifetime if maintained.

- Remove sealant and residue completely and wipe areas clean with alcohol
- Be sure there is no water or oil film on the surface prior to resealing
- Spread the manufacture recommended sealant in an even and continuous bead and let dry per manufactures instructions



### *Cabinet Hinges and Drawer Glides*

If cabinet doors become misaligned, most new cabinet hardware can be adjusted with ordinary household tools such as a Phillips screwdriver.

- Spray a small amount of silicone lubricant on drawers, tracks and rollers that are binding or are sticking
- Repair a broken wood drawer box with wood glue or use epoxy if the joint is coated



### *Caulking*

Over time caulking will dry out and shrink so that it no longer provides a good seal between baseboards and walls, or between millwork counter or vanity tops and walls. In wet areas silicone caulking may shrink, de-bond, or show signs of mildew. Check caulking monthly and repair or replace as conditions indicate, with approved products only.

**Latex Caulk** is non-toxic, cleans up easily and is used in areas that require painting.

**Silicone Caulk** is used where water is present, for example, where the tub meets the tile or at shower stall doors, or where a sink meets a countertop (especially under-mount sinks). Silicone caulk cannot be painted over.



### *Ceiling Fans*

Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. If the room is unoccupied, turn off the ceiling fan to save energy.

- Gently vacuum and/or dust ceiling fan blades every few months and rebalance if fan is wobbly
- If needed, balancing kits can be purchased or sent by the manufacturer typically at no charge

### ***Ceiling Fans continued...***

- Changing the blade direction during winter and summer months provides energy efficiency to heating and cooling

**Tip:** Winter: reverse the motor and operate the ceiling fan at a low speed in the clockwise direction to push the warm air down from the ceiling, saving as much as 10% costs. Summer: change the rotation of the fan blade direction counterclockwise to save as much as 40% costs. *Standing directly under the fan, in the counterclockwise position you will feel a cool breeze.*



### ***Clothes Dryer***

A clogged duct causes a dryer to run inefficiently and can become a fire-hazard. Not all lint is caught in the lint trap, which makes its way into the duct area.

- Vacuum your clothes dryer exhaust duct located at the back of the dryer at least once a year
- If needed, replace the dryer duct with a rigid sheet-metal duct, and always clean your lint screen inside your dryer after every use



### ***Conventional Oven & Range Hood***

- Every 3 months, clean the filter of your range hood exhaust fan with soap and water and rinse and let dry thoroughly before reinstalling
- Clean the burner pans after all spills and under the burner pans on a regular basis
- Use the oven self-cleaning function every 2 months or more



### ***Doors***

- Inspect all interior and exterior doors to ensure they operate correctly
- Look for damaged weather-stripping and listen for squeaky hinges
- To fix a squeaky door, spray the hinges with a silicone spray lubricant or remove a hinge pin one at a time from the hinge, rub petroleum jelly on it, reinsert and wipe away excess

**Tip:** Weather-stripping around exterior door frames and on the bottom of the door is essential to controlling the interior temperature. If it becomes worn out, replace it immediately to avoid increased energy costs as well as dust and pest infiltration.



### ***Drains and Garbage Disposal***

Don't put grease, oil, fat, sand, paint, bones, fruit pits, coffee grounds, starchy or stringy vegetables (potato peels, celery, pasta, rice) or similar items down any drain or garbage disposal.



### ***Drains and Garbage Disposal continued...***

- An easy inexpensive way to unclog a slow moving drain is by dropping half a cup of baking soda into the sink followed by a cup of white vinegar (Do not use this method after commercial drain opener has been used or is still present in water)
- Immediately plug the drain
- Wait fifteen minutes for the clog to clear and pour 4 cups of boiling water or run hot water for a couple of minutes

**Tip:** Get a hair strainer for bathtubs and showers. Remove any accumulated hair from the strainer following each shower or bath. This will reduce the amount of hair that finds its way through the strainer and into your plumbing.



### ***Drip System***

A system that is well maintained with water applied only when and where it is needed can result in savings of 60% water efficiency - your plants and trees can't survive with too much water or too little water.

- Check your plant and tree drip system for breaks and clogs periodically - this will help ensure that each emitter is releasing the proper amount of water
- If you change your irrigation schedule, this is a good time to flush the lines and filters
- Keep a repair kit handy for immediate repairs

**Tip:** Your neighborhood nursery or home improvement store can provide you instructions and parts to keep your drip system operating efficiently



### ***Driveways***

Clean driveways and hard surfaces whenever there is a stain or spill.

- If the job is small, sprinkle a thick layer of cornstarch or baking soda on the oil or grease stains
- Let stand for 12 to 24 hours to help absorb followed by scrubbing with soapy water, and hose rinse thoroughly
- Try to avoid rinsing the water onto nearby plants as soap can damage your plants
- For large area cleaning of driveways and other hard surfaces, power washing is your best solution and a power washer can be rented
- **NEVER** let toxic or hazardous chemicals run into the street gutter and drainage system - It's a violation!!



### ***Electrical System***

The main electrical breaker panel includes a "main shut-off" that controls all the electrical power to the home.

Breakers usually trip because of overloads. If a breaker trips repeatedly check for any of the following causes:

- Plugging too many appliances into an outlet, use of power cords or zip wire, a worn cord or defective appliance, or operating an appliance with too high a voltage or too high of wattage requirement for the circuit

*Electrical Systems continued...*

- Each breaker is marked to help you identify which breaker is connected to each major appliance, outlets or other service
- If a power failure occurs in any single part of your home, the breakers have three positions: **ON, OFF** and **TRIPPED**
- When a breaker trips it must first be turned off before it can be turned back on
- **Switching the breaker directly from 'TRIPPED' to 'ON' will not restore power service**
- **Never work on any outlet breaker or panel without completely shutting off the power at the panel. Frequent electrical panel circuits tripping is a sign that an electrician should be contacted.**



### *Faucets*

The average leaking faucet can waste up to 10,000 gallons per year (epa.gov) and cost you from \$20 to \$200 a year depending on the leak. Fortunately the cause is easy to identify and fix, typically it is a worn out washer, o-ring or valve.

- Clean the Aerator (inside the end of the faucet) every three to four months
- Fixing a leaky faucet can save you up to 10% on your water bill



### *Fireplace*

Clean chimneys don't catch fire. As wood burns, substances build up in the chimney, called creosote. Too much creosote buildup can and will cause a chimney fire.

- Remember to open the damper before each fire and close the damper after all embers have cooled out
  - Keep the damper closed when not in use and during summer and winter to save on heating and cooling costs
  - Clean out completely cooled ashes every few times your fireplace is used
- Have your fireplace and chimney inspected and the chimney cleaned every year with excessive use and every 2 to 3 years with light use



### *Garage Door and Opener*

Vehicles or items left under a garage door that functions improperly could be severely dented or damaged.

- Keep children away from an opening or closing garage door at all times
  - Test your garage door opener every month to make sure it reverses when the sensor (located on the sides of the door frame close to the floor) is interrupted, or the door hits an obstruction
- Apply a lubricant such as silicone spray to all moving parts of the garage door: track, rollers, hinges, pulleys and springs every 6 months

**Caution: The door opener springs are under extreme tension. A homeowner should never tamper with or attempt to adjust this mechanism. Always call a qualified professional to service overhead door springs and mechanisms.**



### *GFCI Electrical Outlets*

Ground Fault Circuit Interruptor (GFCI) outlets have a built-in element that senses small fluctuations in power. A GFCI is just another type of circuit breaker, only more sensitive.

Building codes require installation of these outlets near water sources such as in bathrooms, the kitchen, outside and the garage (areas where an individual can come into contact with water while holding an electric appliance or tool). There are **GFCI receptacles** (outlets) which are installed inside and outside your home and there are **GFCI breakers** which are installed in the electrical panel.

- Each GFCI circuit has a **TEST** and **RESET** button, each is usually colored differently from the GFCI itself and will be clearly marked
- Once each month, press the **TEST** button
- While testing, if the power goes off (trips), the GFCI circuit is working
- If the power does not go off, the GFCI circuit needs to be replaced
- To restore power, press the **RESET** button
- If a GFCI breaker trips during normal use, it may indicate a faulty appliance and you will need to investigate the problem
- One GFCI breaker can control up to several outlets



### *HVAC System and Air Filters*

Dirty air filters are a common cause of air conditioner and heating problems and inefficient operation, and can shorten the life of your HVAC blower motor, eventually requiring unexpected and costly repairs.

- Clean or replace conventional air filters for your HVAC system every 90 days or every 30-45 days if you have pets or other excessive dust producers
- Using inexpensive fiberglass filters is preferred to more expensive HEPA filters
- Turn off the system at the thermostat before removing and replacing the filter
- The register for the air filter is typically located in the hallway ceiling area
- Before removing the filter, notice how it is held in place so you can reinstall it correctly - be sure to read the filter packaging to see which side faces up
- Vacuum the front grills, air registers and return air vents at each location
- Keep the HVAC condensing unit (located outside) surrounding area free of debris at all times, and have the entire system professionally serviced every two years



### *Locks*

Keeping locks in good working order will extend the life.

- Tighten screws if they become loose
- Lubricate door locks with silicone spray or another non-staining, waterproof lubricant
- Avoid using oil as it may solidify and become "gummy"



## *Painting*

Peeling paint is an unsightly mess and an eyesore, and a good paint job always makes a home look nice while providing a protective barrier from the elements.

- Repair cracked or peeling paint immediately once detected
- Touching up paint whether on the exterior or interior of your home is easy to do and inexpensive
- Use low Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) paint whenever possible
- Look at illustrated guides from home improvement retailers or watch videos online to help you troubleshoot paint problems



## *Plumbing*

Learn the location of your pipes and how to shut the water off at each fixture inside and at the water main located outside.

- The water supply to your home can be shut off entirely at your main water shut-off which is located near your water meter typically in your front yard
- Each toilet has a shut-off valve on the water line under the tank at the wall and each sink has both hot and cold water shut-off under the sink or nearby
- Your dishwasher will have a shut-off located under the sink or otherwise located in the supply line



## *Refrigerator*

Dirty coils cause the refrigerator to work harder and less efficiently, meaning a higher electric bill and your refrigerator may stop cooling altogether.

- Use a vacuum or brush to gently clean your refrigerator coils at least once a year
- You will find the coils on the bottom and back of your refrigerator - they contain the coolant that keeps the internal temperature cold
- Remember to unplug before cleaning and plug back in immediately afterward



## *Roof and Gutters*

Be proactive and look for damaged or loose shingles and gaps in the flashing where the roofing meet vents and flues as these areas are the most leak prone. If you see any signs of damage, call a qualified roofer to repair the damage. Gutters are designed to direct accumulated rainwater away from your roof while protecting your home from water damage. If ignored or overlooked, clogged gutters can cause extensive roof and wall damage and rot the gutters themselves.

### ***Roof and Gutters continued...***

- Have your roof inspected by a qualified roofer every three years
- Clean your gutters and downspouts once a year with high water pressure



### ***Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors***

- Replace the batteries in each one of your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors once a year; including hard-wired detectors, which require batteries as a back up
- Place a fire extinguisher on every level of your home - best places include: bedroom(s), kitchen, and garage

**Tip:** You can contact your local fire department with general questions on setting up and inspecting your smoke detectors



### ***Toilets***

Toilets may be one of the most resilient items in a home, but when tank leaks occur, it can be very costly, wasting up to 200 gallons or more per day and costing up to \$840 a year (isustainableearth.com). Avoid a high water bill by testing your toilets for leaks, identifying the cause and repairing it immediately.

- To test for a leak remove the cover on the toilet tank and add a few drops of red food coloring
- Wait about an hour and see if the water in the bowl is pink - If it is, you have a leak
- The leak is caused by a worn or faulty fill valve, tank flapper, flush valve or tank lever



### ***Washing Machine***

It is important to regularly inspect your washing machine water supply hose and drain hose for leaks and make sure it is secured in the drain. One of the top reasons for insurance claims is for water damage caused by leaky washing machine supply lines.

- Inspect hoses at least annually and replace every three years if they are plastic
- Check the snugness of the drain lines by using a crescent wrench or a pair of pliers - you should not be able to tighten the line any further if the line is properly tightened



### ***Water Heater***

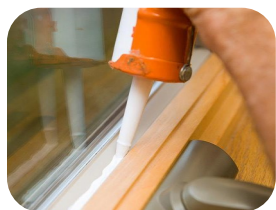
Water heaters (W/H), need maintenance to increase longevity, reduce the possibility of damage and provide energy savings. At least once per year, drain the water from your W/H and clean the inside surface of its floor.

#### **To drain your W/H:**

- Turn off the water supply and power to the w/h (For electric W/H, turning off the power means that you simply flip the circuit breaker to the "off" position. For gas W/H, turn the thermostat setting to the pilot position

### ***Water Heater Continued...***

- Next, connect a garden hose to the drain fitting at the bottom of the tank and put the other end in a place where the draining hot water won't cause any damage
- Turn on all the hot water faucets in your home and then open the drain valve on the Water Heater
- Turn the water supply back on with the drain valve still open to remove any built up sediment in the bottom of the tank
- Then close the drain valve, refill the tank and turn the power back on



### ***Windows***

- Inspect window caulking (sealant) at both the interior and exterior and the weather-stripping once a year, making sure it is intact to protect the interior of your home from cold and hot air drafts and water seepage
- Regularly clean window tracks to keep the weep holes (drain holes) free from dirt and debris buildup for

proper drainage

- If sticking occurs or excessive pressure is required to open or close a window, apply a silicone spray lubricant to the tracks
- Always repair broken or cracked glass immediately to ensure safety measures from injury or theft
- Wash all windows, inside and out as needed to keep your home sparkling



### ***Window Screens***

Window screens keep out unwanted materials and bugs.

- Gently clean your window screens every six months
- Lay the screen on a flat surface, wash with mild soapy water, rinse, and allow to dry in an upright position
- Patch small holes as needed using a screen patch kit

**Tip:** You can reduce your electric bill by opening your windows to keep your home cool during spring and fall months, or when Phoenix weather permits.



### ***Yard Care***

Taking care of your yard is taking care of your investment and your neighborhood.

- Keep weeds pulled and/or use a non-toxic weed emergent
- Keep trees and shrubs trimmed. Trim trees a minimum of 6 feet away from roof areas
- Feed all plants and trees with appropriate nutrient based products

Your neighborhood nursery can provide you with the information to keep your plants healthy and vibrant.

**Tip:** Look for used tools and garden tools at yard sales and online. If you need an expensive tool for just one project, don't be afraid to rent it.

## Essential Home Tips

- ◆ The main causes of toilet clogs are household items being dropped in, such as disposable diapers, excessive toilet paper, sanitary supplies, baby wipes, Q-tips, dental floss and children's toys to name a few. A plunger or coil spring-steel auger can be used to unclog a toilet.
- ◆ A plunger and a plumber's snake can be used to unclog a drain.
- ◆ Periodic checking and tightening of screws throughout your home is the best way to keep most fixtures, cabinets, and door handles, hinges and locks in good working order.
- ◆ The majority of fixtures, appliances, and hardware have bolts and screws. To **loosen or remove** a light bulb, screw or bolt, **turn counter clockwise**. To **tighten or insert** a light bulb, screw or bolt, **turn clockwise**.
- ◆ Set your water heater at 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Do not store anything on top of your water heater and keep the area clear of clutter.
- ◆ Always run cold water when using the garbage disposal. Never pour hot grease/oils of any kind.
- ◆ Don't set your refrigerator or freezer temperature colder than necessary, refer to manufacture guidelines for recommended temperature settings. You can purchase an inexpensive refrigerator/freezer thermometer to know your actual temperature.
- ◆ Behind and under the refrigerator may need to be cleaned more frequently if you have pets. Remember to unplug while cleaning and immediately plug back in.
- ◆ Check the seal around your refrigerator and freezer for leaks and replace the seal if damaged. To test the door seals, close the door on a dollar bill and attempt to pull it out with the door closed. If you cannot easily pull the dollar bill out from the door, your seals are in good shape. However, if the bill slides out without much resistance, it's time to replace the seals.
- ◆ Every two years have your HVAC system professionally serviced for better heating and cooling, energy savings and longer life.
- ◆ While the initial purchase of a washable reusable air filter may be high, in a very short amount of time it will pay for itself and not need replacing for 5 years or more. Every 3 months (90 days), or 30-45 days if you have pets, just rinse with a garden hose, let thoroughly air dry and reinsert it with the direction arrows pointing up.
- ◆ Clean the filter on your dishwasher every 3 months or more frequently if you don't rinse your dishes prior to loading the dishwasher.
- ◆ To help a window slide easily, rub the channel with paraffin (wax).

## Green Home Cleaning Tips

Using natural cleansers that do not release toxic chemicals in your home is an excellent way to maintain your family's health. Try using products you are likely to have in your kitchen instead of harsh cleaning products. They are often less expensive and when used properly are not harmful to your family.

**Be sure to read all labels precautions before using any product.** It is recommended to always test any cleaner on a hidden area to make sure there is no color change or damage to the surface or area. **NEVER MIX DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLD CHEMICAL PRODUCTS: BLEACH WITH AMMONIA, BAKING SODA, HYDROGEN PEROXIDE, VINEGAR, RUBBING ALCOHOL OR ANY OTHER ACIDS AND VINEGAR WITH HYDROGEN PEROXIDE OR BAKING SODA. NEVER STORE GASOLINE OR FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS IN GARAGE AREA.**



### *Lemon Juice*

Lemon juice, a natural bleach and disinfectant, is an excellent stain remover and deodorizer. To clean and deodorize your garbage disposal, push ice cubes with cut-up lemon pieces including rinds and run the disposal with cold running water for at least one minute.



### *Club Soda*

Club soda is a natural stain remover and works well on fabrics and carpets without bleaching. Test before use.



### *Baking Soda*

Baking soda is a mild, natural abrasive that can be used to clean most surface types without worrying about scratching. It is also a great deodorizer for your refrigerator or freezer. Baking soda is known to be one of the most versatile, natural cleaners.



### *White Vinegar*

White vinegar works like an all-purpose cleaner, disinfectant and deodorizer. Simply mix equal parts water and vinegar in a spray bottle and you are ready to clean most areas of your home. Careful though, mixing improperly diluted vinegar is acidic and can affect tile grout, and should not be used on marble surfaces. However, diluted vinegar is excellent to use on glass windows as it dissolves soap scum and hard water deposits too. As for your home smelling like vinegar, the smell disappears once it dries along with pre-existing home odors.



### *Hydrogen Peroxide*

Hydrogen peroxide has great stain fighting powers. Keep a solution of hydrogen peroxide and grease fighting dish detergent (such as Dawn) in a spray bottle to lift pet stains from carpets, and perspiration stains from clothing.



## Your Local Resources

If you should seek professional assistance with your maintenance needs, refer to the brief description of local resources that will direct you toward selecting the appropriate specialist.



### *Handy-Man vs. Contractor*

Deciding on the appropriate service provider for your home repair and improvement need is based on the work required.

Handymen are excellent for small home repairs, such as window repair, cleaning gutters, painting, flooring and some minor plumbing. It is important to keep in mind

that certain work may require a licensed professional, and this will vary based on local licensing requirements.

For work such as electrical, HVAC, major plumbing, home additions or renovations, a licensed Contractor will be the most appropriate service provider. One of the greatest benefits of hiring a licensed Contractor is the expertise and licensing that will allow for a broader range of services and work guarantees.



### *Local Hardware Store*

Apart from selling household hardware for home improvements, hardware stores offer a wide range of services. From fixing broken screens and windows to repairing power equipment, re-wiring vacuums and lamps, re-keying entry locks, minor repairs to faucets and shower parts, and making home and car key copies. Stop on in to your local hardware store and you might be surprised how much you can get accomplished. They

can also be a resource for tool and equipment rental.



### *Friends and Neighbors*

Whether you need home improvement advice or need to borrow a tool, one of your greatest resources will be the people closest to you. In addition, friends and neighbors can help recommend trusted service providers in your area.

## Home Maintenance Toolbox

Throughout this guide you will find references to tools, some of which you may not be familiar with. Below we provide a list of useful tools that will help you complete the vast majority of all basic home maintenance and repairs.

Acquire tools as you can afford them. A general rule is best to invest in good quality well-made items that will last and last.

### Top 15 Tools

1. Claw hammer
2. Flathead screwdriver
3. Pliers
4. Adjustable wrench
5. Cross-head screwdriver
6. Safety glasses, work gloves and dust masks
7. Bucket
8. Ladder and/or step stool
9. Nail set (punch set)
10. Extension cord (25 ft. 3 prong, 12 or 14 gauge for power tool use)
11. Cord or cordless drill/driver
12. Plumbers Teflon
13. Scraper and putty knife
14. Flashlight
15. Toilet plunger



### Additional Tools

- Needle nose pliers
- Ratchet set
- Tape measure 25 feet
- Locking pliers
- Combination pliers
- Utility knife (box knife)
- Mini level
- Rubber mallet
- Wire cutter/stripper
- GFCI receptacle/electrical tester
- Clamps
- Chisels
- Staples/Staple gun
- Hand saw
- Portable workbench
- Tape and black electrical tape
- Allen wrench set
- Cable, stud and pipe detector

## DIY Repair Resources

For additional information, refer to do-it-yourself (DIY) home repair guides/manuals such as:

- ◆ *Black & Decker The Complete Photo Guide to Home Improvements* by Editors of Creative Publishing
- ◆ *Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual: Completely Revised and Updated* by Editors of the Family Handyman
- ◆ *New Fix-It-Yourself Manual: How to Repair, Clean, and Maintain Anything and Everything In and Around Your Home* by Reader's Digest
- ◆ *How Your House Works: A Visual Guide to Understanding and Maintaining Your Home* by Charlie Wing
- ◆ *Home Maintenance for Dummies* by James Carey
- ◆ *Big Book of Home How-To* by Better Home and Gardens
- ◆ Find the Healthy Homes Guide at [hud.gov/healthyhomes](http://hud.gov/healthyhomes)
- ◆ For a list of free City of Phoenix sponsored workshops visit: [www.phoenix.gov/nsd](http://www.phoenix.gov/nsd) and access the Neighborhood College Workshops
- ◆ Find *Do-It-Yourself* videos and workshop information at local home improvement and hardware retailers and websites





### **Neighborhood Code Compliance**

Neighborhood Code Compliance staff is responsible for ensuring compliance with many city codes and ordinances, including the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance, the Zoning Ordinance, Mobile Vending regulations, and portions of the Animal Ordinance. These regulations are local laws adopted by the Phoenix City Council to promote health and safety, protect the community from blight and deterioration, and enhance the livability of the city of Phoenix.

Neighborhood code compliance staff has primary enforcement responsibility for the city codes noted above, but also work in partnership with other city departments and agencies to ensure both residents and businesses are in compliance with these and other city code regulations. The Neighborhood Services Department (NSD) achieves code compliance through a combination of education, resource/assistance, community referrals, and enforcement.

#### **Reporting Blight Violations to NSD**

Report blight by submitting a form on-line, e-mail, telephone, or smartphone the using the following methods:

- \* Report a common blight violation on-line at: <https://www.phoenix.gov/nsd/report-blight>
- \* Email a blight violation at: [blight@phoenix.gov](mailto:blight@phoenix.gov)
- \* Call in a violation at 602-534-4444, ext. 1
- \* Submit a complaint using a free smart phone application for Androids and iPhones using "MyPhxAZ" and Check the Status of a Code Enforcement Case.

Review the status of an active or closed code compliance case by address or NSD case number at:

[http://jphxprd.phoenix.gov/tm\\_web/search-case-init.do](http://jphxprd.phoenix.gov/tm_web/search-case-init.do)

**For a listing of upcoming Code Compliance 101 workshops, visit:**  
[www.phoenix.gov/nsd/neighborhoodcollege](http://www.phoenix.gov/nsd/neighborhoodcollege)

## Neighborhood Services Department

General Information 602-534-4444  
Neighborhood College Workshops 602-534-4444, ext. 4  
**For a list of upcoming workshops visit:**  
[www.phoenix.gov/nsd/neighborhoodcollege](http://www.phoenix.gov/nsd/neighborhoodcollege)  
Report Graffiti & Other Violations 602-534-4444, ext. 1  
Use the smart phone app (MyPhxAZ)  
Email: [blight@phoenix.gov](mailto:blight@phoenix.gov)  
Report graffiti in progress, call 9-1-1

## City of Phoenix and Community Resources

Tool Lending Program 602-534-4444, ext. 2

**Abandoned Vehicles**  
Streets, Alleys 602-262-6151  
**Adult Abuse** 877-SOS-ADULT  
**Alley**  
Trash in Alley 602-262-7251  
**Child Abuse** 888-SOS-CHILD  
**Drainage**  
Clogged Street Drain 602-262-6284  
For emergency requests after hours, please call: 602-262-6441  
**Fire Department (In an Emergency, Call 9-1-1)** 602-495-5555  
**Gas Leaks**  
Southwest Gas (In an Emergency, Call 9-1-1) 1-877-860-6020  
For Energy Saving Tips, visit: [www.swgasliving.com/energysavingtips](http://www.swgasliving.com/energysavingtips)

**Planning & Development**  
Building permits, planning, and zoning 602-262-7131  
**Police Department (In an Emergency, Call 9-1-1)** 602-262-6011

**Power Outages**  
APS (24-hour Customer Care Center) 602-371-7171  
For Energy Saving Information, visit: [www.aps.com](http://www.aps.com)  
SRP (Report a power emergency) 602-236-8811  
For Energy Saving Information, visit: [www.srpnet.com](http://www.srpnet.com)

**Sewers** 602-262-6691  
**Sidewalks** 602-262-6284  
**Trash & Recycling** 602-262-7251  
**Water Leaks, Broken Hydrants & Water Main Emergency** 602-261-8000  
For Water Conservation Tips and Information, visit:  
[www.phoenix.gov/waterservices/resourcesconservation](http://www.phoenix.gov/waterservices/resourcesconservation)

**Appliances and Critical Home Systems  
Warranty Tracking Log**

<u>Systems</u>	<u>Manufacturer</u>	<u>Model Type</u>	<u>Contact Information</u>
<i>Example: Air Conditioning Unit</i>			
<b><u>Appliances</u></b>			
<i>Example: Range or Refrigerator</i>			

Notes:

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**City of Phoenix**

*“Home impacts every aspect of daily life including health, safety and educational attainment,” by Home Matters for Arizona 2013.*



Neighborhood Stabilization Program



**HEALTHYHOMES**  
Healthy Families | Healthy Children

