



How To Operate Your Home

TOM FEIZA'S TIPS FOR OPERATING YOUR HOME

SERVICE REQUIREMENTS BY THE CALENDAR

Reprinted from Chapter 8 of Tom Feiza's book – *How To Operate Your Home*.
The complete book is available at Amazon.com or through Tom Feiza at www.misterfix-it.com.

Home operation and maintenance is easy if we understand our home systems and stay organized. A home operates just like a car—with the right maintenance, you can avoid major problems and efficiently run your home for many years. The key is preventing problems or catching small problems before they become home disasters.

If you don't change the filter on the furnace on a routine basis, you can freeze up the coil, and you will come home to a very warm house. If you don't turn off the exterior hose connection in the winter, you can come home to a flood.

This chapter provides that little bit of organization that helps us all remember to perform important preventive maintenance tasks. It offers lists of maintenance tasks to be performed on a routine basis. Refer to specific chapters in the book for detailed information on the specific tasks. Follow manufacturers' instructions for all service.

Remember, not every maintenance item will be applicable to your home or its systems. You need to do the homework here—study and understand the systems in your home.

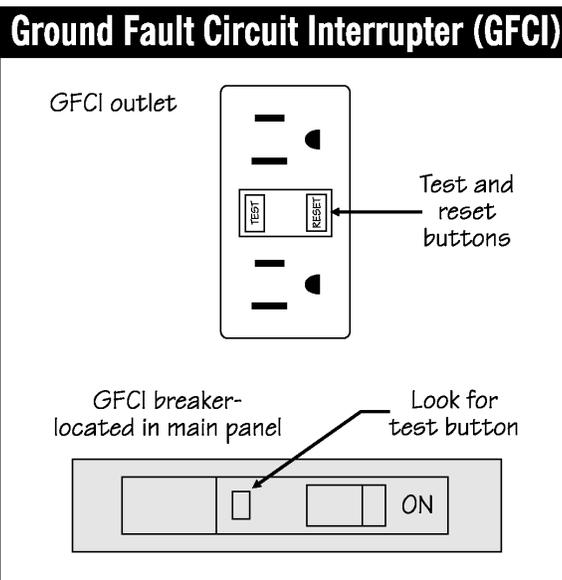
Exercise caution before attempting inspection, maintenance or repairs. Turn off

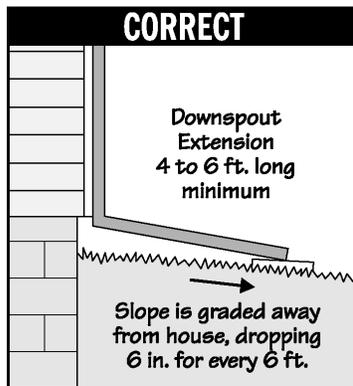
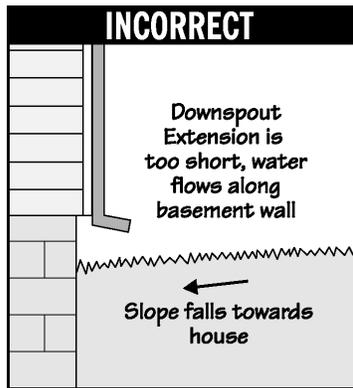
the power and disconnect other utility services. Follow any owner's manual supplied by the equipment manufacturer. If you don't understand a problem or system, consult a professional.

DAILY AND WEEKLY

Be aware of any changes or strange sounds in your home. If the automatic garage door opener is groaning, the door and track may need lubrication, or perhaps a roller is broken. If you smell sewer gas in the basement, you may have a dried out floor drain trap. If the central air conditioner is squeaking, you may have a bad bearing on the fan motor. If a gutter is overflowing, expect water in the basement or crawl space. Just watch for changes, and address issues as they arise.

Be watchful during drastic weather changes. Weather can have a huge effect on our homes. A big snowstorm may make it necessary to clear your furnace's intake and discharge vent pipes. During periods of heavy rain, it is wise to check gutters and downspouts and make sure that the sump pump is working properly. If the furnace runs constantly or more often than you expect, check for a problem.





MONTHLY

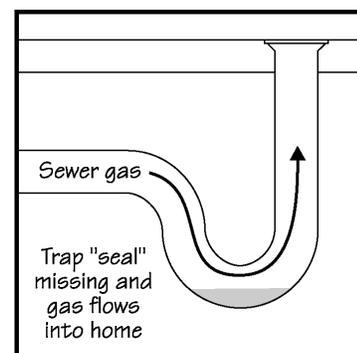
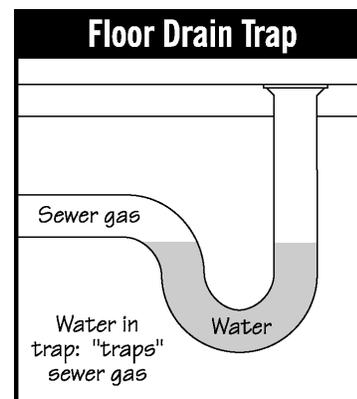
When these systems are in use, perform the following checks monthly.

System	Check Fire and smoke alarms. Test alarm.
Fire extinguishers	Check pressure; service as needed.
Carbon monoxide alarm	Test alarm, and check reading.
Warm air heating system	Check and change or wash filter (unless it is a special type). See Figure 8-1.
Furnace, high efficiency	Check condensate drain to make sure it is clear and draining.
Gas heat, water heater	Check flue pipe (smoke pipe) to chimney for damage, rust, condition.
Air conditioning	Check and change or wash filter (unless it is a special type); check condensate drain to make sure it is clear and draining.
Heat pump	Check and change or wash filter (unless it is a special type).

Steam heating system	Check water level and service as needed.
Shower and tub drains	Clear out hair and other debris.
GFCI	Test GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) outlets and breakers.
Plumbing	Check for any leaks at fixtures, traps and piping.
Water softener	Check salt supply.
Clothes dryer	Clean lint from filter (after every use) and check duct for lint.
Garage door operator	Test auto-reverse safety feature.

SPRING

Air conditioning	Schedule professional service. Check that unit is level and clean and has proper clearance. Adjust main duct dampers if needed.
Humidifier	Turn off unit and water supply. Switch humidifier's duct damper from winter to summer setting as needed.



Duct dampers	Adjust dampers for a switch from heating to cooling if necessary.
High and low returns	Open high returns and close low returns for cooling season. See Figure 8-2 .
Whole house fan	Check belt, lubricate, clean.
Gutters, downspouts	Clean gutters and make sure downspouts are attached and extended.
Roof	Visually inspect for any damage. Trim trees if needed.
Roof vents	Inspect for damage or bird nests.
Chimney	Visually inspect for any damage to cap, flashing and masonry.
Sump pump	Test sump pump to make sure it removes water from the crock.
Exterior, general	Check condition of paint, caulk and putty.
Exterior, grounds	Check that grading of soil and hard surfaces slopes away from the basement.

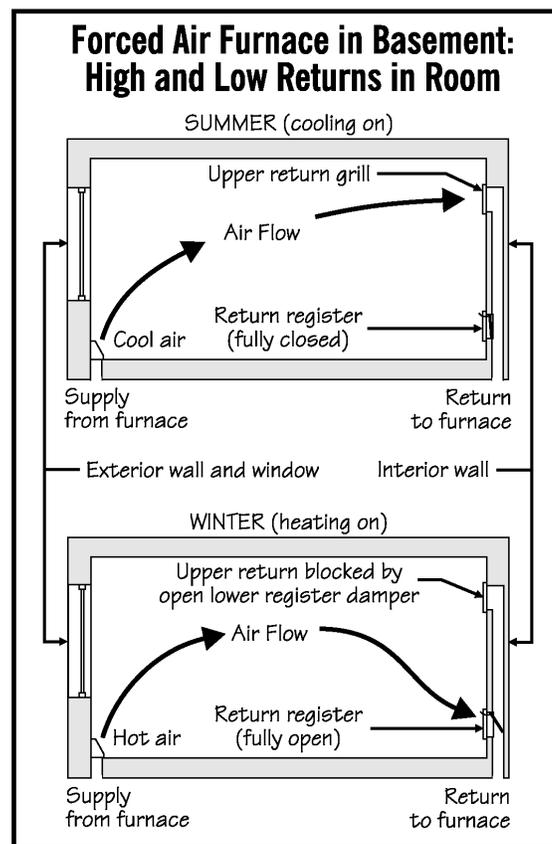


Figure 8-2.

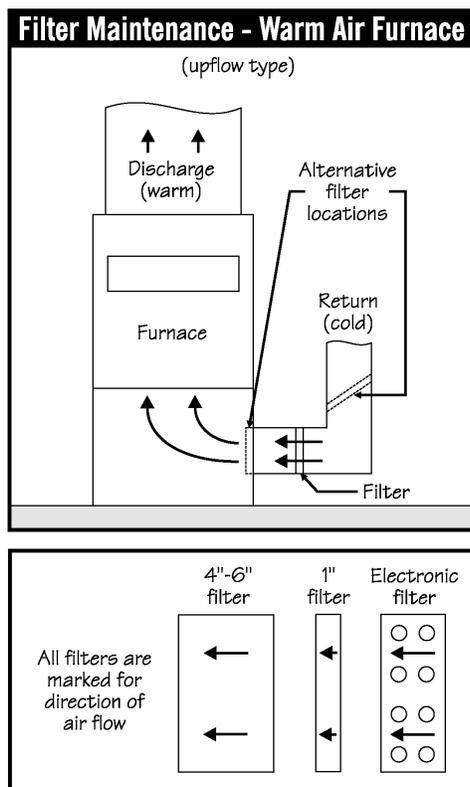


Figure 8-1.

Attic	Check for signs of leaks, mildew, condensation.
Basement	Check for any signs of leaks, cracks, movement, rot, mildew.
Crawl space	Check for adequate ventilation to remove excess moisture.
Dehumidifier	Clean; start operation in basement as needed.
Plumbing	Open outside hose connection shutoff.
Clothes dryer	Clean lint from duct and from unit per manufacturer's instructions.
Refrigerator	Clean coil, clean drain pan, and check drain.
Range hood	Clean filter, wash fan blades.
Bathroom exhaust fans	Clean grill and fan.
Bathroom tile	Check grout, caulk and tile for damage.
Water heater	Draw sediment from tank as needed.
Sprinklers, irrigation	Service and start system.
Decks	Cleans and seal as needed.

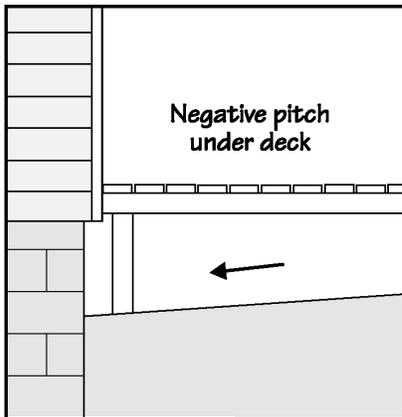
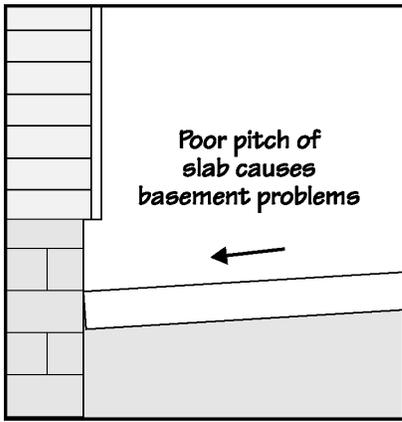


Figure 8-3 Grading Problems.

SUMMER

- Air conditioner** Keep bushes and plant material clear of unit. Maintain air conditioner's filter on furnace. **See Figure 8-4.**
- Gutters & downspouts** Clean gutters, and make sure downspouts are attached and extended.
- Sump pump** Test sump pump to make sure it removes water from the crotch.
- Exterior** Complete any major paint, putty, wood repair and caulking projects.
- Fireplace** Schedule professional cleaning and service as needed.
- Wood stoves** Schedule professional cleaning and service.
- Chimney and roof** Schedule profession service as needed.
- Exterior metal** Check metal railings, and paint as needed.

FALL

- Air conditioning** Cover top of unit if desired at end of cooling season.
- Heating** Schedule professional service; lubricate fan, motor, and pumps.
- Oil heat** Arrange for maintenance and oil delivery.
- Water heater** Service gas and oil water heaters. Draw sediment from tank as needed. Check for carbon monoxide.
- Humidifier** Service, clean, change water panel as needed. Switch duct damper as needed from summer to winter setting.
- Duct dampers** Adjust dampers for the switch from cooling to heating if necessary. **See Figure 8-5.**
- High and low returns** Open lower returns and close upper returns for heating season.
- Gutters, downspouts** Clean gutters and make sure downspouts are attached and extended.
- Roof** Visually inspect for any damage; trim trees as needed.
- Roof vents** Inspect for damage or bird nests

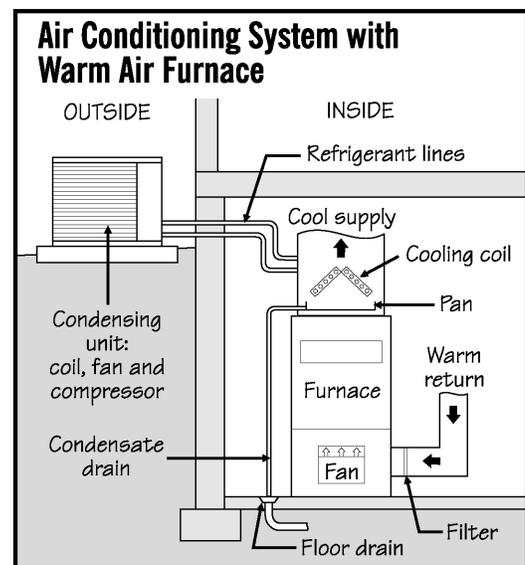


Figure 8-4.

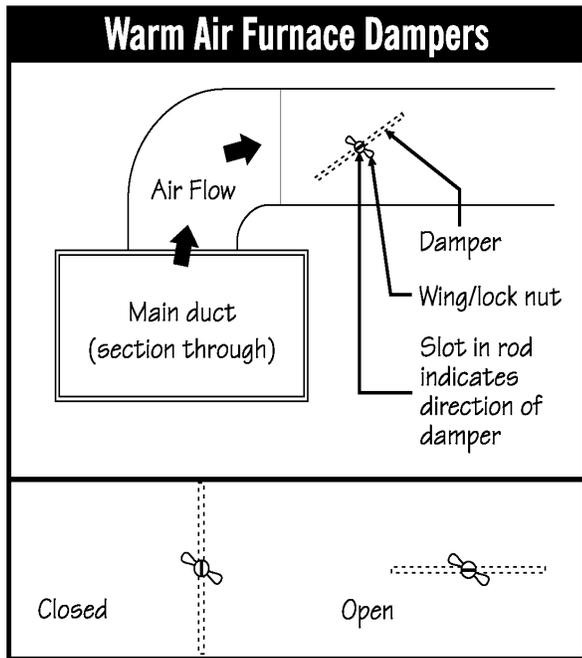


Figure 8-5.

- Chimney** Visually inspect for any damage to cap, flashing and masonry. **See Figure 8-6.**
- Sump pump** Test sump pump to make sure it removes water from the crotch.
- Exterior, general** Check paint, caulk and putty condition.
- Weatherstripping** Check and repair weatherstripping on windows and doors.
- Exterior, grounds** Check that grading of soil and hard surfaces slopes away from basement.
- Basement** Check for any signs of leaks, cracks, movement, rot, mildew.
- Crawl space** Check for adequate ventilation to remove excess moisture.
- Plumbing** Close outside hose connection shutoff
- Clothes dryer** Clean lint from duct and unit per manufacturer's instructions.
- Bathroom tile** Check grout, caulk and tile for damage.
- Garage door** Tighten all hardware, and lubricate moving parts.
- Fireplace** Check flue, damper, firebox.

- Sprinklers, irrigation** Drain and service system.
- Room air conditioner** Remove unit, or install cover.
- Swimming pools** Service and close.
- Hoses** Remove from hose bibs; drain to prevent freezing.

WINTER

- Fire and smoke alarms** Change batteries, vacuum to remove dust, and test.
- Carbon monoxide alarms** Change batteries, and test.
- Roof and gutters** Monitor for ice dams, and record problems for future corrective work. **See Figure 8-7.**
- Sump pump** Test sump pump to make sure it removes water from the crotch.
- Furnace** Lubricate fan, motor, and pumps as required at mid-season
- Washing machine** Check supply hoses for damage. Clean screens in hose connections.
- Doors and hardware** Lubricate hinges and moving parts.

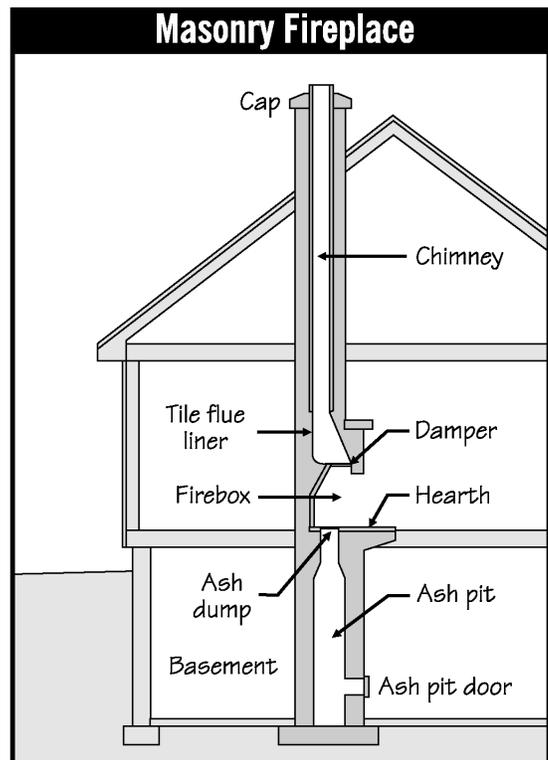


Figure 8-6.

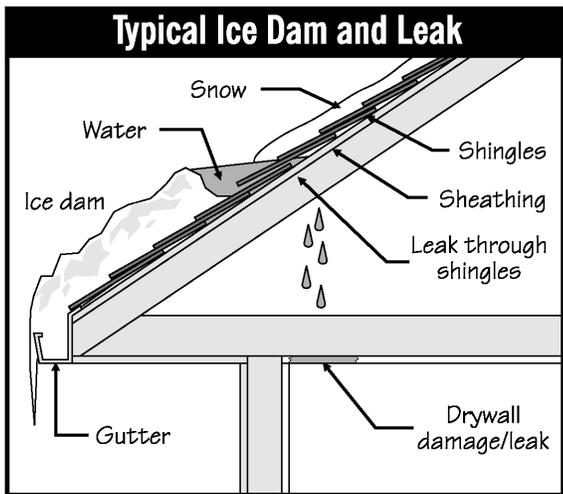


Figure 8-7.

PERIODIC MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE AS NEEDED

Septic system	Schedule professional pumping and inspection at least every 2 years. See Figure 8-8.
Water softener	Clean brine tank and screens or filters as needed.
Well system	Test water for bacteria and other contaminants. Check pressure tank operation.
Fire and smoke alarms	Replace alarms every 10 years. See Figure 8-9.
Fireplace	Schedule cleaning and inspection as needed, depending on use.
Water filters	Replace as needed.
Water treatment units	Replace and service as needed.
Electric baseboard	Vacuum and clean based on usage.
Gas appliances	Check flexible gas connectors for stove, dryer, etc., yearly.

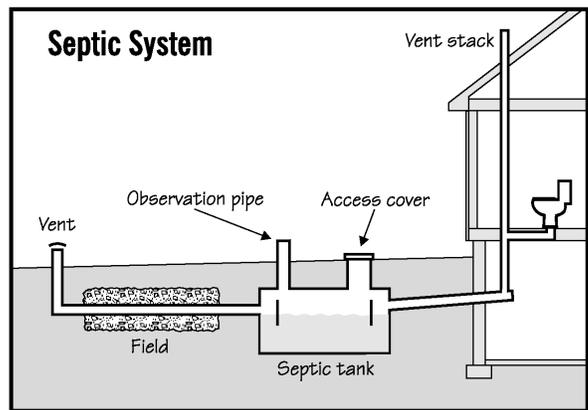


Figure 8-8.

Range hood	Clean filter and fan.
Shutoffs	Periodically have your whole family review all utility disconnects.
Termites and other pests	Schedule professional inspections and service as needed.
Electrical	Eliminate extension cords. Check for damaged cords, plugs or outlets.
Water heater	Test pressure and temperature relief valve. Replace leaking valves.
Plumbing	Test main water shutoff. If it is hard to operate, call a plumber.

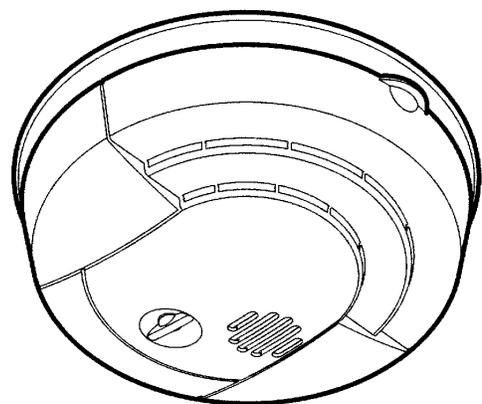


Figure 8-9.

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WRITTEN BY TOM FEIZA

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Tom Feiza is a Professional Engineer known as "Mr. Fix-It" through his home improvement radio show on AM 620, WTMJ, his writing and appearances. Tom also provides home inspection services and consults on home construction and repairs. You can reach Tom at 262-786-7878, P.O. Box 510724, New Berlin, WI 53151.



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