

The Efficient Home

Getting ready for spring and summer

Tom Krawczyk • TJH Energy Consulting

7our long months of winter since December of last year has finally passed. We now can start enjoying the warmer temperatures and getting out doors for a look around the house. Is it inspiring to see the grass turn green and the flowers bloom? There are always a number of things to get started on outdoors so here are some tips on what to look for and do about maintaining your home after a long winter.

What do you do if you have sump pump? It is very important to see if is operating since heavy rains can cause flooding around the foundation. We need to prevent water from saturating our basement walls and bringing high moisture into the basement areas.

Check that the sump pump and float switch for proper operation. Put a few 5 gallon pails of water in the sump pit if it is dry and cycle the pump. The float switch can be activated manually to see if the water does pump out. This is important since I had a float switch fail and several boxes on the floor were damaged from water draining down the floor!

Be sure the discharge pipe is not clogged and does exit water either through piping to a storm drain or piped away from the home. What can happen? If the discharge pipe is not far enough away from your home, water will find its way back to the drain tile system and cycle the sump pump more often. Be sure to always extend the sump drain piping away from your home after maintaining the lawn.

You may notice damp or musty smells in the basement this time of year, especially if you had any water seeping in. Run a dehumidifier to remove moisture in the basement. An Energy Star® rated dehumidifier is a great choice since these units use less electricity and run quieter. Dehumidifiers are sized by the number of pints of water they can remove in a 24 hour period.

What if I still notice water trying to leak into my basement? Install gutters and

downspouts if they are not on your roof. Check and be sure your gutters are clear of leaves and debris. The gutter drains and down spout pipes should not be clogged. Downspout extensions remove water away from your home and should be directed to drain away down a sloped grade.

Before you start planting flowers or shrubs around the house, look at the soil. Is soil depressed and does it slope towards the house? As rain falls on the siding it washes down and can easily pool if your ground does not slope away from the house. If so get some soil and build up a slope from grade going up the concrete wall so water will drain away.

Invest in window well covers to further direct rain water away from your basement walls if basement windows have water leaking in during heavy rains.

What about your furnace since you're not using it for heating? This is a great time to put in a new furnace filter. Check to see how clogged it may be. If you have central air conditioning you will be ready

to go for the season since it will run more efficiently.

Here are a few air conditioning tips. Be sure to clear debris and keep shrubs at least two feet from all sides of the outdoor coil unit. The high capacity fan draws air through the outdoor coil and needs optimum air flow to operate efficiently. You may want to contact your local HVAC professional to check the refrigerant charge. A properly charged central air conditioning system cools more efficiently and reduces your electric costs. It's now time to get outdoors, look around your home and enjoy the coming spring and summer seasons.

I am also available as a local southeast Wisconsin Energy Star Homes®, Home Performance Energy Star® consultant to answer any questions you may have about energy improvements in your home.

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