

Home tips for autumn:

Your home, like your car needs a regular check up if you want it to perform properly. It is very important to periodically monitor the overall condition of your home. Every year as the leaves begin to turn color and fall, you should do a walk-around home check to find any potential problems and make the correct repairs or improvements.

Be sure to check all the major components and systems that protect your home. These include the windows, doors, roof, gutters, exterior siding or finish steps and the foundation. Don't forget the systems that protect you such as heating and cooling, chimney, plumbing and electric system. Keep the roof gutters clean of leaves and ensure that the down spouts discharge 4-6 feet away from the perimeter of the residence. Look for signs of damage or deterioration. Watch for conditions that will allow moisture into the structure; leaking hose bibs and negative grading or low lying areas that can direct water towards the foundation. Be sure and check for cracks in the siding, damaged or missing caulk and old weather strips around windows and doors, this includes garage doors. Replace these as needed. Also clean any dirt and debris from the window sills. Make sure to check any weep holes if your windows or sliding doors have them. These holes allow excess moisture to escape from storm windows, window trim and door tracks.

On the inside check for any of the walls, floors or ceilings stained or discolored from moisture. The source of the leaks can be tricky to find. Water from a roof leak can travel along a rafter and surface at the window and this will appear to be a leak at the window. I once tracked a water leak back to the chimney cap and the water stains were on the living room carpet 3 feet in front of the fireplace! Water was entering the chimney, dripping into the corner of the firebox and then traveled UNDER the brick hearth in a seam in the plywood sub floor and then seeped upward and left quarter sized stains in the carpet.

Be sure that the furnace filter is replaced regularly and that the air ducts are well sealed and remain clean. Most duct systems in two story homes include a damper to regulate airflow between the two floors. This setting should be adjusted between heating and cooling seasons. Since hot air rises less air needs to be directed to the second floor during the heating season and vice-versa during the cooling season. With utility costs on the rise, insulation is very important component that should not be ignored. Installing additional insulation is an inexpensive improvement that can pay for itself within a year. The attic should be properly air-sealed and the integrity of the attic ventilation should be protected when improving the insulation.

These are just a few thoughts and recommendations to consider before cold weather hits. If you have any questions or your home needs further evaluation, please give us a call at Central Illinois Inspection Corp. or go to the "contact us" page and send us an email with your questions.