



# ***Maintaining the Home***

## ***Foundations, Basements and Yards***

# ***Maintaining the Home: Foundations, Basements and Yards***

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- Water that strikes the house or drips down from the roof should drain away from the foundation walls. The gutter and downspout system should keep water from pooling around the foundation where it can create a moisture problem. Be sure gutters and downspouts are kept open and in good repair.
- Trim shrubs and bushes away from the foundation walls. Clearance space should be at least one foot.
- Check masonry foundation walls for cracks or weakened, crumbling mortar.
- Examine main support beams, support columns and floor joists for evidence of bowing or warping.
- Check wood structural members, such as joists, beams, and columns, with a screwdriver or pocket knife to be sure wood is solid and free from decay.
- Check the inside and outside of all foundation walls and piers for termite tubes and damage. You may choose to have an insect-control company do this each year.
- Check that the crawl space vapor barrier is in good condition and placed correctly. A vapor barrier is usually a polyethylene material (6-mil) that covers 70 to 100 percent of the crawl space, depending on the severity of the moisture problem.
- Examine the inside of basement walls for dampness or water stains indicating seepage or a leak.
- In colder areas of New Mexico, water lines and outside faucets need some freeze protection or winter drainage. In addition, garden hoses should be drained and stored for the winter.
- Clean leaves and debris from around an outside heating/air conditioning condenser and trim back shrubs that may block air movement around the house.
- Yard care power equipment should be drained of fuel in the late fall or early winter and serviced according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Doorways, below grade window wells, and storm drains should be cleaned of debris or leaves.
- Driveways and walks should be checked for cracks, breaks or erosion that may damage them. If asphalt surfaces need repairing, be certain you have the equipment and skill to do a lasting repair job. Otherwise, choose a reputable contractor. Unrepaired cracks in concrete can lead to further damage.
- Clean and repair garden equipment after the last use of the season. Remove dirt and rust, then store in dry area. Winter is a good time to file rough spots on hoes and shovels and to apply linseed oil to handles of garden tools. Thoroughly rinse pesticide and herbicide

sprayers to prevent clogging, and rinse fertilizer spreaders to prevent corrosion.

- A septic tank needs periodic attention. Learn how to check for sludge and scum accumulation in the tank, and have solids pumped out of the tank as needed.
- Fences, gates and retaining walls should be checked for ease of operation, condition of structure, and materials. Make repairs as needed.

This material was adapted from publications produced by North Carolina State University Extension. NCSU Cooperative Extension publications can be found on the Web at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs>.

*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

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Make a Basic Toolkit for Simple Home Repairs  
Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products  
Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

#### **Heating**

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Fireplace and Chimney Care

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Air Conditioner  
Ceiling Fans

#### **Plumbing**

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How to Unclog a Toilet  
Repairing Dripping Faucets

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How to Set or Reset a Circuit Breaker  
How to Replace a Fuse

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Choosing a Water Heater

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Dryer Care and Dryer Cleaning  
Freezer Care and Freezer Cleaning  
Garbage Disposal Care and Cleaning  
Range and Oven Care and Range Cleaning  
Refrigerator Care and Refrigerator Cleaning  
Small Electrical Appliance Care and Cleaning  
Washer Care and Cleaning

#### **Flooring**

Buying new carpet  
Carpet Care and Cleaning  
Wood Floors Care and Cleaning  
Ceramic Tile Floors Care and Cleaning  
Vinyl Floor Coverings Care and Cleaning

#### **Walls**

Selecting and Applying Paint  
Wallpaper Selection and Cleaning  
Repairing Walls

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Selecting Fabric For Home Furnishings

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Exterior Walls, Windows, and Doors

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Roof Maintenance

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Principles of Xeriscape  
Watering Your Lawn

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Is Your Home Safe From Fire Hazards?  
Smoke Alarms Save Lives  
Carbon Monoxide Alarms  
Are Your Children Safe From Poisons?  
Protecting Yourself Against Burglary

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Easy Tips to Save Money and the Planet  
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Energy-Efficient Heating and Cooling  
Indoor Water Conservation Tips  
Outdoor Water Conservation Tips

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Create a home recycling center  
Healthy Indoor Air for New Mexico Homes  
Dealing with Mold  
Household Hazardous Waste  
Hazardous Household Substances: Alternatives That Are Relatively Free of Toxic Effects  
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Cognitive Difficulties  
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