

Top 5 Home Maintenance Tips

5. **Plumbing** – Water loss through leaking toilets, sinks and other plumbing fixtures can increase your water bill by more than 30%. Replace leaking faucet valves and toilet parts to save hard earned dollars and conserve an increasingly precious natural resource.
 4. **Heating and cooling systems** – To prevent energy loss and higher heating and cooling bills, schedule regular inspections of furnace and air conditioning systems. Building safety codes require that these appliances be properly installed and maintained to ensure they are safe, functional and efficient. Exhaust ducts should also be checked for blockages that could cause poor operation or safety hazards.
 3. **Windows** – Energy loss through windows is another budget buster if leaks and loose fasteners aren't repaired or replaced. Building safety codes require that windows be well-maintained and weather tight to prevent leaks and improve energy efficiency. Insects like to take advantage of openings, too, which is why codes require the use of window and door screens to reduce insect infestations.
 2. **Roofs and gutters** – Check your roof for shingles that are buckling or curling and look for open seams and missing fasteners, especially around vents and chimneys. All can be signs that your roof is wearing out. Also check walls and ceilings for signs of water damage. Even small leaks can cause thousands of dollars in damage. Clogged gutters can also cause damage to your home. Clean them by removing debris by hand, then flushing the gutters and downspouts with a garden hose.
 1. **Smoke detectors** – Building safety codes require smoke detectors outside of each bedroom and on each story of a home, including basements, to warn occupants of smoke and fire. Test your smoke detectors monthly and replace the batteries at least twice a year.
-

Top 5 Ways Building Codes Make Your Summer Safer

5. **Grilling safety** – The most current fire safety codes prohibit the use of charcoal and gas grills on combustible porches or within 10 feet of combustible construction. When grilling cook away from siding, deck railings, eaves, overhead power lines and overhanging branches; periodically remove grease; use proper starter fluid and store it safely; check propane hoses for leaks; do not move hot grills; and dispose of used charcoal properly.
4. **Protection from electric shock** – Building safety codes for pools and spas require proper electrical grounding, bonding and protection by GFI (ground fault interrupter) circuits. They turn off the power to the outlet before someone can be harmed. All outdoor outlets are required to have GFI circuits.
3. **Safe porches, decks and balconies** – Porches can collapse if they are improperly constructed or improperly maintained. Building or repairing to code, which usually requires a building permit and inspection, will help increase the likelihood the porch is safe. Hazards to look for include porches nailed to buildings instead of attached with anchors or bolts; split or rotting wood; wobbly handrails or guardrails; loose, missing or rusting hardware; missing, damaged or loose support beams and planking; poor end support of the porch

deck, joists or girders; swaying or unstable porches.

2. **Pool and spa drain covers** – Building safety codes require pool and spa drains to have a cover or grate to protect from entrapment or suction. Without the cover, hair or body parts may be trapped, causing serious injury or drowning.
 1. **Pool fences and alarms** – Building safety codes require at least a four-foot-high fence around in-ground and above-ground pools holding more than 24 inches of water. Gates must be self-closing and self-latching and doors with direct access to pools must have alarms.
-

Top 5 Ways Building Codes Protect You and Your Family

5. **Scald protection** – Building safety codes require that showers be equipped with anti-scald valves to prevent injury.
4. **Ground fault interrupters (GFI)** – Building safety codes require GFIs in kitchen, bath and outdoor outlets. They turn off the power to the outlet before someone can be harmed by an electrical short in the circuit.
3. **Emergency escape and rescue openings** – Building safety codes require all basements and bedrooms to have at least one emergency escape and rescue opening to the outside.
2. **Stair rails** – Building safety codes address the size and space of stair rails to prevent children from or falling through stair railings (guards) or getting their heads stuck. They also protect the general population by regulating the height of stair guards.
1. **Smoke detectors** – Building safety codes require smoke detectors outside of each bedroom and on each story of a home, including basements, to warn occupants of smoke and fire.