

A GUIDE FOR HOME OWNERS

Home Maintenance / Check List

NEIGHBOURHOOD
IMPROVEMENT
DIVISION



Introduction

In a continuing effort to improve our standard of customer care, this booklet has been produced to encourage regular maintenance of your home.

The information contained in this booklet should help you identify solutions to some of the problems associated with home maintenance and repairs.

We hope you will find this checklist useful and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

For further information please contact:

Neighbourhood Improvement Division
Private Sector Housing
Home Owners Advice Service
125 Albert Road
Blackpool
FY1 4PW

Tel: (01253) 477477

(Please ask for Private Sector Housing)

Fax: (01253) 478010



Chimney Stacks

Symptoms:

Damp patches on chimneybreast and/or party walls in the bedrooms.

Check that: -

- ✓ The flaunching is not perished or cracked. (sand/cement bedding)
- ✓ The pot is not missing or broken.
- ✓ The lead flashing is not torn, split or displaced.
- ✓ The mortar joints are not crumbling.
- ✓ The brickwork is in good condition.

If the flue is no longer in use through solid fuels such as coal, the cause of dampness may be hot gases from the gas fire condensing in the flue, in which case you may need to install a flue-liner in the existing chimney. The inspection of the chimneystack or the roof can be carried out by standing on the opposite footpath.

Pitched Roofs

Symptoms:

Damp patches on ceiling below roof.

Check that: -

- ✓ The slates/tiles are not missing or broken.
- ✓ The ridge tiles are not loose, missing or cracked. (See common building terms leaflet)
- ✓ The tiles/slates have not slipped.
- ✓ The verge is properly pointed and any gaps sealed. (Edge of roof gable wall)

If more than 10% of the slates are held in position by tingles (a strip of lead) the roof should be re-slated. Pitched roofs require very little maintenance if any.

Household Insurance

Are the household contents insured?

Check that: -

- ✓ The contents of your house are insured against loss, damaged or theft. When valuing the contents, go through each room separately.

As for contents, there are two different types of policies 'indemnity' and 'index linked'. 'Under indemnity' the replacement costs is paid which takes into account the age and wear and tear of the item. Under 'Index Linked' the item is replaced with new irrespective of its condition.

Building Insurance

Is your house insured?

Check that: -

- ✓ The house is adequately insured against all perils.
- ✓ The house is insured for the rebuild cost should it be totally destroyed.
- ✓ The outbuildings such as outside toilets and garden fences are included in the policy.

Note: In order to have peace of mind, it is wise to read what the policies cover. For example structural damage due to foundations being washed away may not be covered.

Flat Roofs

Symptoms:

Damp patches on ceiling.

Check that: -

- ✓ The roofing-felt is not lifted up, ripped or torn.
- ✓ The water is not gathering in pools on the roof.
- ✓ The felt is not exposed to direct sunlight.

Flat roofs generally have a life of 15 to 20 years, provided they are laid in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. If the roof has more or less come to the end of its useful life, consider the idea of replacing it with a pitched roof. A sheet of tarpaulin may be laid over the whole of the roof as a temporary repair and to prevent further damage.

Exterior Timber, External Painting

Symptoms:

Draughts around window and doorframes.

Sagging or binding rear yard gates. (Sticking)

Draughts around doors and windows.

Flaking, loose or blistered paintwork.

Check that: -

- ✓ The mastic around window and doorframes is not cracked or has fallen off.
- ✓ The door, doorframe has not shrunk or warped.
- ✓ The putty is not cracked or missing.
- ✓ The joints, hinges, gatepost and door casings are not loose.
- ✓ The gaps around the casings are sealed.
- ✓ The knots are not bleeding.
- ✓ The paint is not flaking or blistered.
- ✓ The timber is not rotted.
- ✓ The capping is not missing.
- ✓ The timber is regularly treated with suitable paint, preservatives or stain.

Remember to follow the manufacturers instructions as printed on the container.

Security

Is your house secure?

Check that: -

- ✓ All ground floor windows have locks fitted to them.
- ✓ Both front and rear doors are fitted with mortice locks.
- ✓ There is a chain fitted to the front door and preferably to the back doors also.
- ✓ There is a neighbourhood-watch scheme in your area.
- ✓ The concealed areas around your house are well lit at night or there is security lighting installed.
- ✓ The milk and newspapers do not pile up on your doorstep when you are away on holidays.

Mains Services

Check that: -

- ✓ The members of the family know how to turn off the gas, water and electric main taps/switches.

In the event of a gas leak: -

Put out cigarettes or naked flames.

Switch off the electric fires.

Do not operate light switches or any electrical appliances.

Turn off the gas main tap at the meter, put the handle at right angles to the pipe.

Open plenty of doors and windows and let out the gas and let in the fresh air.

Telephone your local gas area office immediately, day or night.

In the event of a burst pipe: -

Turn off the appropriate gate valve to isolate the damaged pipe, or the main stopcock.

Open all taps in the house and flush the toilet to drain the cold water system.

If the water is running down a light fitting in the ceiling or on the wall switch off the light and remove the appropriate fuse from the main fuse box.

Contact a plumber immediately.

Drains / Plumbing

Symptoms:

Water not draining from bath, sink or wash hand basin.

Stains underneath taps.

Blocked gully.

Flooding/foul smells from gullies. (Grid)

Flooding/burst pipes.

Check that: -

- ✓ The traps under the sink, wash hand basin or the bath are not blocked. It may be possible to clear blockages with a plunger.
- ✓ The taps are properly closed after use.
- ✓ The taps are not leaking. Replace washers if necessary.
- ✓ The radiator valves or joints are not leaking.
- ✓ The gully is not blocked. Scoop out any debris, etc. from the gully and pour down a bucket of caustic soda solution. (Follow manufacturers instructions).
- ✓ The pipes are fully lagged to prevent from freezing.

Electricity

Symptoms:

Spasmodic operation of appliances.

Plug fuse keeps blowing.

Circuit fuse keeps blowing.

Electrical fittings loose or askew on walls.

Please note:

If electrical problems occur you should:

- ✓ Contact your electrical supplier.
- ✓ Contact a suitably qualified electrician, National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) or Electrical Contractors Association (ECA).
- ✓ Telephone numbers of electrical contractors who are members of the above associations can be found in your local Yellow Pages.

Website: www.niceic.org.uk/consumers/index.html



Dryrot

Symptoms:

Presence of damp atmosphere containing 20% moisture. (Meter reading)

Presence of fungi.

Appearance of root like strands on timber, plaster and brickwork.

Appearance of fruiting bodies.

Musty mushroom like smell.

Vertical and horizontal cracks (cubes) in the timber are formed.

Timber is soft when prodded and turns to powder when pressed.

Seriously weaken or/and destroy the structure of the house.

Check that: -

- ✓ The areas such as cellars have adequate ventilation.
- ✓ The moisture content in such areas is kept below 20%.

Dry rot is not easy to detect as it usually attacks timber hidden from sight and it can effect adjoining houses as well as move from cellar to roof space. Cube shaped formation on the skirting is a clear sign of dry rot. On discovering dry rot, contact a specialist firm immediately. Obtain an insurance backed guarantee for any work carried out.

Heating

Symptoms:

Heating not coming on.

All radiators not equally hot.

Radiators hot at the bottom, cold at the top.

Continuous venting of radiators necessary. (Bleeding)

Black liquid on venting.

Radiators will not vent.

Check that: -

- ✓ Central heating boilers and gas fires are serviced annually by a C.O.R.G.I. Registered plumber.
- ✓ Rooms with gas appliances have proper flues and suitable ventilation.

Note: Telephone numbers of C.O.R.G.I. Registered plumbers can be found in your local Yellow Pages.

Energy Efficiency Advice

There are a number of options of energy efficiency measures that your home could benefit from i.e. cavity wall insulation, loft insulation or central heating.

For further advice contact:

The Energy Efficiency Team
125 Albert Road
Blackpool

Tel: (01253) 477477

(Please ask for Energy Efficiency Team)

Insulation

Symptoms:

Loss of heat through the roof.

Loss of heat through the floor.

Loss of heat through the walls and windows.

Water droplets on cold water pipes.

Check that: -

- ✓ The loft is fully insulated especially close to the eaves with insulation material at least 12 inches (300mm) thick.
- ✓ The floorboards are not loose or draughty.
- ✓ The gaps around window and doors are sealed.
- ✓ There is no dampness coming through the solid floor.
- ✓ The floor has sufficient insulation.
- ✓ The hot water tank and pipes are fully lagged.

Note: If you are planning any building works to your home you should consider the energy efficiency of the construction elements you are proposing to use. The more efficient they are, the greater the saving will be on your energy bill.

Dampness

Symptoms:

Condensation on windows, walls, and tiles.

Condensation in the kitchen and bathroom.

Mould in corners of bedrooms, bathroom and behind the units in the kitchen.

Damp patches above skirting.

Discolouring of wallpaper.

Check that: -

- ✓ There is adequate ventilation.
- ✓ The extractor fan (preferably with a humidistat) is fitted in the kitchen and bathroom.
- ✓ The extractor fan is turned on in good time.
- ✓ There is adequate circulation of air in all rooms.
- ✓ The black mould is not appearing in corners and if necessary remove using liquid household bleach and detergent.
- ✓ There is no rising dampness and/or bridging of Damp Proof Course.
- ✓ The rainwater from the roof is not running down the walls.

Wetrot

Symptoms:

Presence of damp atmosphere containing 30% moisture. (Damp meter reading).

Bubble paintwork.

Soft wood that falls apart (under pressure).

Wood beyond affected area.

Check that: -

- ✓ The rain is not penetrating the timber.
- ✓ The bare timber is not exposed to weather.
- ✓ The wood is suitably treated with paint, preservatives or stains.
- ✓ The water does not gather in pools on the windowsills or sink units.
- ✓ The moisture content in the air within the house is kept below 30%. (Improve ventilation)

Gutters

Symptoms:

Water flowing over edge of gutter.

Water leaking through the gutter.

Water leaking at the joints. (Guttering joints)

Split, broken or blocked rain water pipe.

Check that: -

- ✓ The gutter is not blocked, sagging or loose.
- ✓ The union is not blocked. (connection)
- ✓ The joints are properly sealed.
- ✓ The gutter is not rotted.
- ✓ The rain water pipe is not split, missing or broken.
- ✓ The gutters are regularly painted with suitable preservatives both internally and externally.



Bricks, Blocks and Rendering

Symptoms:

Faulty pointing on brick or concrete walls.

Spalling, Efflorescence (salts) or mould growth on walls. (salts)

Damp patches on the inside of rendered walls

Check that: -

- ✓ The pointing is in good condition.
- ✓ The walls are free from moss growth.
- ✓ The rendering is not cracked or loose.
- ✓ The brickwork is not absorbing excessive amounts of rain.
- ✓ The cavity is not being bridged.
- ✓ The DPC is not defective.

Spalling is caused by frost. This is where absorbed rainwater freezes within the brick and expansion forces the surface to break off. Spalling can be avoided by coating the brickwork with silicone. Efflorescence is a white powder like substance often found on new brick walls. With natural weathering it will eventually stop. Mould growth on walls is the result of moisture in the air. If left unattended, it will eat its way into the mortar and age the wall prematurely. Mould can be removed with a stiff brush using diluted household liquid bleach. Always follow manufacturers instructions.

Interior Decorating

Symptoms:

Brown rings on painted timber.

Lifting edges or bubbles under the wallpaper.

Loose or damaged floor tiles.

Cracked, loose or damaged wall tiles.

Check that: -

- ✓ The knots in the timber are not bleeding. Strip to bare wood apply shellac knotting (sealer) to the knots, prime and repaint.
- ✓ There are no under lying problems such as dampness in the plasterwork. Apply adhesive (paste) to the loose edge, allow it to soak into the paper and press down.
- ✓ The tiles are not loose or damaged, remove loose tiles, scrape adhesive from the tile and floor, apply new adhesive and refix in position. Replace any damaged tiles. Repeat for wall tiles.

Safety

Is your house a safe place to live?

Check that: -

- ✓ The furniture contains fire resistant (retardant) foam.
- ✓ There are at least two smoke detectors fitted in the house preferably one on the ground floor and one at the first floor.
- ✓ The members of household do not smoke in bed.
- ✓ There is a fire extinguisher kept in a convenient place.
- ✓ The members of the family know where the main switches are located.
- ✓ The children do not play with matches or are left in the house unsupervised.
- ✓ Everyone knows possible escape routes in the event of fire.



To ensure our services are accessible to all, documents prepared by Blackpool Council are available in large print, Braille, on audio-cassette or computer disk upon request.

We can also provide help for British Sign Language users and provide information in other languages. Please ask for details or telephone 477477.