

NW Suburbs Home Maintenance Checklist

A year-round, printable checklist built for homes in Chicago's northwest suburbs, where freeze and thaw, spring rain, summer storms, and lake-effect cold punish anything you put off.



Print it • Post it in the garage or utility room

4 seasons + monthly checks

DIY vs. call-a-pro guide inside

How to use this checklist

Work one season at a time. Check a box when the task is done and write the date beside it if it matters, especially furnace, AC, sump pump, and roof work. Keep this copy with your home records and start a fresh copy each January.

You do not need to do everything in one weekend. The monthly 10-minute checks on this page catch most problems while they are still cheap.

The NW suburbs rule of thumb: If water or cold air can get in, it will. Gutters, grading, caulk, hose bibs, and the sump pump do more to protect a home here than any cosmetic upgrade.

Every month: the 10-minute walk-through

- ☐ Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Replace batteries when the clocks change.
- ☐ Look under sinks and around the water heater for drips, rust, or damp smells.
- ☐ Check the sump pit: pour in a bucket of water and confirm the pump kicks on and drains.
- ☐ Run little-used faucets and flush little-used toilets to keep traps and seals working.
- ☐ Check furnace or AC filter. Replace it if you cannot see light through it.
- ☐ Walk the basement after heavy rain and note any new damp spots, cracks, or efflorescence.

SPRING

March - May: Thaw, rain, and restart

Goal: Move meltwater and spring rain away from the house, and get cooling ready before the first hot week.

- ☐ **Test the sump pump and backup.** Spring rain plus snowmelt is peak basement-flood season here.
- ☐ **Clean gutters and downspouts.** Confirm downspouts carry water at least 4 to 6 feet from the foundation.
- ☐ **Inspect the roof from the ground.** Look for missing, curled, or lifted shingles after winter ice and wind.
- ☐ **Check grading.** Soil should slope away from the house. Fill low spots where water pools against the foundation.
- ☐ **Turn outdoor faucets back on slowly.** Check inside the wall for leaks from a winter-split pipe before using them fully.
- ☐ **Schedule AC service.** Clean or replace the filter, clear debris from the outdoor unit, and confirm the condensate drain runs clear.
- ☐ **Seal driveway and walkway cracks.** Water that got in all winter expands damage in the next freeze.
- ☐ **Wash windows, check screens, and re-caulk** any cracked exterior caulk around windows, doors, and siding joints.

SUMMER

June - August: Heat, storms, and outdoors

Goal: Keep cooling efficient, drainage clear, and the house ready for a fast-moving summer storm or outage.

- ☐ **Keep the AC breathing.** Trim shrubs back from the outdoor unit and change filters monthly during heavy use.
- ☐ **Check attic ventilation and look for pests.** Heat trapped in the attic shortens roof life and raises cooling bills.
- ☐ **Inspect deck, fence, and play equipment.** Tighten loose boards and hardware, and seal wood that has gone gray and dry.
- ☐ **Test GFCI outlets** in kitchens, baths, garage, and outdoors. Press test, then reset.
- ☐ **Storm kit check:** flashlights, batteries, phone chargers, bottled water, and a plan for the sump pump if power goes out.
- ☐ **If you have a generator,** run it briefly under load, check fuel and oil, and review safe placement: outdoors only, well away from windows and doors.
- ☐ **Clean the dryer vent run** to the outside, not just the lint trap. Lint buildup is a common, preventable fire risk.
- ☐ **Trim branches** hanging over the roof and service lines before storm season peaks.

September - November: Winterize early

Goal: Finish before the first hard freeze, which in northern Illinois can arrive in late October. This is the highest-value season on this list.

- ☐ **Schedule furnace service in September**, not after the first cold snap when every HVAC company is booked out.
- ☐ **Shut off and drain outdoor faucets.** Disconnect hoses, turn off interior shut-offs, and open the outside tap to drain. A split hose bib is a spring flood.
- ☐ **Clean gutters again after leaves fall.** Clogged gutters in winter feed ice dams that push water under shingles.
- ☐ **Check attic insulation and sealing.** Warm air leaking into the attic melts roof snow unevenly and creates ice dams.
- ☐ **Seal drafts:** weatherstripping on doors, caulk around windows, and foam gaskets on exterior-wall outlets.
- ☐ **Service the chimney and fireplace** before first use if you burn wood or use a gas fireplace regularly.
- ☐ **Drain and store** garden hoses, rain barrels, and irrigation lines. Blow out sprinkler systems if you have one.
- ☐ **Stock winter basics:** salt or sand, a sound shovel, and a roof rake if your roof has a history of ice dams.

December - February: Freeze protection

Goal: Monitor, do not overhaul. Winter work is mostly watching the few systems that fail expensively in the cold.

- ☐ **Protect exposed pipes.** Insulate pipes in unheated garages, crawl spaces, and exterior walls. Know where the main water shut-off is.
- ☐ **During deep cold:** let faucets on exterior walls drip slowly and open cabinet doors under sinks so warm air reaches the pipes.
- ☐ **Watch for ice dams** and icicles along eaves. Heavy icicles are a symptom, not decoration. Note the spot for spring insulation work.
- ☐ **Change furnace filters monthly** and keep all vents and returns unblocked by furniture or rugs.
- ☐ **Keep indoor humidity in check.** Condensation on windows all winter can mean excess moisture that damages frames and feeds mold.
- ☐ **After a storm,** clear snow away from furnace and dryer vents, the gas meter, and foundation vents.
- ☐ **Going away?** Keep heat at 55 degrees or higher, shut off water if the house will sit empty, and ask a neighbor to check in.
- ☐ **Test detectors again** mid-winter, when furnaces, fireplaces, and space heaters run hardest.

Once a year: book the pros

Service call	Best timing	Why it matters here
Furnace tune-up	September	Catches a failing igniter or heat exchanger before heating season, when waits are longest.
AC tune-up	April - May	Efficiency and drain problems are cheap before summer, expensive during a heat wave.
Roof inspection	Spring or fall	Freeze-thaw lifts shingles and flashing. A small repair now prevents a ceiling leak later.
Sump pump check / replacement	Early spring	Pumps often last 7 to 10 years. Replace on your schedule, not during a storm.
Water heater flush	Any season	Sediment shortens tank life and raises energy use. Note the install year on page 5.
Septic / sewer review, if applicable	Per system guidance	Tree roots and older lines in established suburbs cause slow drains long before a backup.
Chimney sweep, if you burn wood	Fall	Creosote buildup is a fire risk that grows with every season of use.

DIY or call a pro?

Usually safe to DIY

- Filters, detectors, and batteries
- Gutter cleaning on a single story with a stable ladder
- Caulk, weatherstripping, and touch-up paint
- Faucet aerators, showerheads, toilet flappers
- Deck sealing and minor tightening

Call a licensed pro

- Anything involving gas lines or furnace internals
- Electrical panel work or new circuits
- Roof work beyond a ground-level look
- Sump, sewer, or main water line problems
- Structural cracks, sagging, or water intrusion you cannot trace

Before you hire anyone: Confirm they are licensed and insured for the trade, get the scope and price in writing, ask who pulls the permit, and never pay the full amount up front. Keep the quote with this checklist.

This guide is general homeowner education, not professional advice for a specific home. When in doubt on gas, electrical, structural, or roofing work, stop and call a qualified local professional.

My home record

Fill this in once and update it when equipment changes. When something breaks at 9 pm on a Sunday, this page is the one you will be glad you kept.

HOME ADDRESS

FURNACE: MAKE / YEAR / FILTER SIZE

MAIN WATER SHUT-OFF LOCATION

AC: MAKE / YEAR

ELECTRICAL PANEL LOCATION

WATER HEATER: TYPE / YEAR

GAS SHUT-OFF LOCATION

SUMP PUMP: YEAR / BACKUP TYPE

ROOF: MATERIAL / YEAR INSTALLED OR LAST REPAIRED

TRUSTED PLUMBER

TRUSTED HVAC COMPANY

TRUSTED ELECTRICIAN

TRUSTED ROOFER

If the power goes out

- ☐ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Food stays cold far longer unopened.
- ☐ Check the sump pit every few hours during rain. A battery or water-powered backup earns its cost in one storm.
- ☐ Run a generator outdoors only, at least 20 feet from the house, with exhaust pointed away. Never in a garage, even with the door open.
- ☐ Unplug sensitive electronics or use surge protection when power flickers back on.

Need a local pro for something on this list?

Search the Northwest Home Services Directory by trade and town to find verified local businesses in Chicago's northwest suburbs, read their ratings, and request quotes in one place. Claiming and searching are free for homeowners.

Stay on the seasonal list: Homeowners who downloaded this checklist get a short reminder at the start of each season with just that season's tasks, plus new local guides as they publish. No daily emails, and you can unsubscribe any time.

Prepared by Northwest Home Services Directory. General education only. Verify a contractor's license and insurance before hiring, and follow manufacturer instructions and local codes for all equipment.