

Regular Window, Door and Hardware Maintenance

Windows

Windows come in a variety of shapes, sizes, designs and materials. Double hung, casement, awning and sliding windows open by different methods. Fixed windows let in light but can not be opened. Skylights can be fixed or they can be opened manually or by an electric motor. Windows can be made of wood, vinyl, steel, aluminum, vinyl-clad wood, aluminum-clad wood or vinyl-clad aluminum.

A typical window contains glass, framing around the glass called the sash, framing around the window opening and moulding around the frame. Windows may be a single pane of glass or may contain two or more layers of glass with air space between the layers for insulation. A coating on “low-E” glass reflects radiant heat back into your home during the winter and reflects heat from the sun’s rays away from your home during the summer.

Inspection

Inspect your windows once each year. Begin by opening and closing the windows. If the windows stick, it may be that moisture is swelling wood windows. Allow the wood to dry during the summer, inspect for decay and re-seal. Sticking windows can also be caused by excessive layers of paint between the frame and sash. Use a putty knife or a “window zipper” to cut through the paint. Cleaning the window’s track with a brush and lubricating the inside of the track with petroleum jelly or silicone spray can also solve window-sticking problems.

Wood windows should be inspected inside and out for paint and decay problems in the same manner as wood siding and wood trim.

Maintenance

Clean the tracks on windows that open with a brush or vacuum at-tachment. Lubricate the inside of the track with petroleum jelly or silicone spray, removing any excess. Casement windows that operate by a crank-and-gear mechanism should be maintained by occasionally cleaning and lubricating the window mechanism.

Look for broken glass panes, bent sashes, loose, broken or missing hardware and torn or damaged window screens. Inspect locks and latch handles for proper operation and secure fit. Check seals, caulking and weather stripping to ensure cool outside air cannot enter your structure from around a window. Make any necessary repairs.

A word on washing your windows: few things affect the feeling of a room more than the quality of light coming through the windows. The easiest, fastest and most effective way to clean windows is with a squeegee and clear ammonia or dishwashing detergent and water. Use a professional-quality window squeegee with replaceable blades. Use a squeegee extension pole to reach windows that are beyond reach. A squeegee scrub sleeve is the most efficient way to scrub the windows before squeegeeing.

Finally, check to make sure all opening windows move freely. You want to be certain that your family can exit through windows if necessary.

Exterior Caulking

Caulking is used to seal joints, gaps and seams in exterior walls. Without caulking, cool air, water and insects could enter your home through these openings. All caulking compounds dry out over time. Check for cracked, loose or missing caulking as part of your spring and autumn maintenance inspections. Typically, your home should be re-caulked every five years or less. Caulking around some areas may deteriorate sooner. Repair deteriorated caulking as soon as it appears.

Where to Inspect: You will find caulking where different surfaces meet. These surfaces include the roof where one flashing meets another flashing, where flashing and a roof or dormer surface meet and where a chimney, flue, plumbing or electrical pipe, attic fan or skylight protrudes through the roof surface.

Caulking is found on exterior walls where siding and trim meet at corners, around window and door frames, between badly fitting pieces of siding, where pipes, framing members and other protrusions pass through siding, and where siding meets the foundation, patio, deck or any other different part of your home.

Applying Caulking: Caulking is one of the simplest jobs a home owner can perform. No special skills or expensive tools are required and it does not consume much time. However, you must prepare the area to be caulked properly. Begin by removing the old caulk. Then clean the area before applying the new caulk. Different caulks have different uses and are to be applied in different ways. Read the caulk manufacturer's instructions carefully before applying the new caulk.

Contact LCEF to find an Architectural Advisory Committee member near you for additional information.



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10733 Sunset Office Drive
Suite 300
St. Louis, MO 63127-1020
800-843-5233
lcef.org

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