

Appliances

This section discusses your water heater, garbage disposal, automatic dishwasher, oven, cook top and smoke detector. Refrigerators, clothes washers and clothes dryers are also discussed.

Electric and gas appliances are accompanied by instruction booklets and other papers. Save these papers in an appropriate place, preferably an appliance folder that's in a filing cabinet. Read all instruction literature carefully, remove, fill out and mail any postcards necessary to record warranties and perform all recommended maintenance.

If an electric appliance fails to operate, be sure that it is plugged in before you call a repair service. Be sure the circuit breaker for that appliance is on. If a gas appliance fails to work, check to see that the pilot light is lit. If you suspect a gas leak, turn off the main gas shutoff valve near the meter and call the gas company immediately.

Many appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, etc., have motors that require periodic servicing. Consult the manuals that came with the appliances for information about care of these motors.

Water Heater

Most homes have domestic hot water that is heated by electric, gas or oil water heaters. As a hot water faucet is opened, heated water is drawn from the top of the water heater's tank. The heated water is replaced by cold water that flows into the bottom of the tank. When the water temperature drops below a pre-set minimum, a thermostat activates electric heating elements or a gas or oil burner.

A temperature-pressure relief valve guards against excessive temperatures and pressures. This safety valve should be located near the top of the tank. A discharge pipe should be attached to the relief valve and run down the side of the tank to just above the floor. This discharge pipe prevents burns and other damage from discharged water. There must be no valves, caps or other obstructions preventing discharged water from draining rapidly.

If the temperature-pressure relief valve ever discharges steam or boiling water, shut off the water heater and call a plumber immediately.

Sediment can accumulate at the bottom of your water heater's tank. This reduces the unit's efficiency and can cause serious damage. Unusual noises from the tank such as



“whistling and sizzling” or “rumbling and cracking” can be a sign of sediment buildup. A drain valve near the bottom of the water heater can be used to prevent sediment accumulation. Once a month, place a bucket under the valve and drain water and sediment from the bottom of the tank (5 gallons or so) until the water runs clear.

You should also inspect your water heater once every 6 months. During the inspection, check to see whether there are any signs that water has leaked or been discharged from the temperature-pressure relief valve. If so, call a plumber immediately. The relief valve may be faulty or there may be a problem with the water heater.

Test the relief valve by lifting or pressing down on its handle. Water should flow through the valve and down the discharge pipe. If water does not flow through the valve or if water continues to drip from the valve after the handle is released, call a plumber immediately to replace the defective valve.

Inspect the cold water supply pipe, the hot water outlet pipe, the water heater’s metal housing and along the unit’s base for rust, corrosion and signs of leaks. If you find a moist area, wipe it with a towel to determine whether the moisture is from a leak or from condensation. Repair all leaks or have the tank replaced if necessary.

If you have a gas or oil-fired water heater, you should have the unit professionally serviced at the same time your heating system is serviced. The service person should inspect and test the temperature and pressure relief valve, drain sediment from the tank, inspect the flue assembly and clean and adjust the burner ports.

Also, click the following link for more on water heaters -
http://aspecresidential.com/uploads/Water_heater.pdf

Garbage Disposal

Your garbage disposal’s instruction booklet gives precise directions for the disposal’s operation. Be careful not to clog disposal drains with grease. You should be as careful of grease in your disposal as you are with any other drain.

Clean your garbage disposal by grinding ice cubes in the disposal regularly. Then “flush” your garbage disposal with hot water and baking soda once a month to prevent residual grease and soap from fouling your garbage disposal or clogging its drain.

Always run cold water when the disposal is on. Should the disposal drain become clogged, do not put chemicals down the disposal. If your disposal becomes overloaded with a substance it cannot grind, consult your instruction book.

Twice a year, tighten the drain connections and fasteners and look for signs of water leaks. See the manufacturer’s instruction booklet for more information.

Automatic Dishwasher

Clean your dishwasher control panel with a lightly dampened cloth. Dry thoroughly. Do not use abrasives or sharp objects on the panel. Clean the outside with a good appliance polish wax. Scouring pads and harsh and gritty cleaners can damage the outside cabinet.

Clean the strainer and the spray arm once every three months. Other than that, the inside of the dishwasher should never need cleaning.

Inspect for water leaks every six months. First, complete a load of dishes in the dishwasher. Then, look along the front of the dishwasher for leaking water. Next, take off the front panel along the bottom of the unit and look underneath for signs of leaks. Look for water, water spots and signs of water damage. Have any leaks repaired immediately.

Oven

Your oven's appliance manual sets out safety precautions, operation instructions and oven care suggestions. Do not use scouring pads or abrasive cleaners on the control dial area, front door, or trim of your oven.

You can test your oven's thermostat by placing an accurate oven thermometer in the center of a 350 degree oven. After 20 minutes, check the reading. If it's more than 100 degrees too high or too low, replace the control. If the difference is less than 100 degrees, pull the oven control knob off and locate the calibration screw. Tighten or loosen the screw. Keep testing until the temperature is correct.

Cook top

Review your cook top's appliance booklet for safety precautions, operation instructions, care and maintenance suggestions and troubleshooting information. Follow the manufacturer's recommended cooking procedures.

Never let the burners get too dirty. If you have a spill over, let the burner cool, then clean immediately. If stains and cooking soil are allowed to burn onto the burner, they become more difficult to remove. Be careful when lifting heavy grills.

Range Fan

A range fan near your cook top vents cooking fumes. This fan contains a filter for trapping grease. This filter should be removed and cleaned periodically. You can clean this metal filter by hand with dishwashing detergent and water or place it in the dishwasher. Clean the fan blades and the fan's housing twice a year.

Smoke Detector

A smoke detector may be the only warning that saves you and your household from a fire while you sleep. Test your detector once each month by pressing the test button. The detector should sound its alarm. Pick a day, such as payday or the first day of the month, and test all smoke detectors. When you adjust your clocks in the spring and fall, change the batteries in each smoke detector.

Dust can interfere with the smoke detector's sensor. Use a vacuum attachment to clean around your smoke detectors and their sensor's when you change batteries. By maintaining your smoke detectors, you may save the life of someone you love.

Refrigerator

Refrigerators have a drain in their floor. Water from melting frost flows out this drain,

into a pan and evaporates. Food particles can clog the drain and cause odors. Clean the drain regularly by removing its stopper and using a pipe cleaner or similar device to push any accumulations through to the drain pan below. Force a cleaning solution of detergent and water through the drain. Empty, wash and replace the pan. You should also vacuum the condenser coils along the back or bottom of the refrigerator.

The door gasket, if washed often with soapy water, should last as long as the refrigerator. If you suspect the gasket is no longer sealing well, test it by holding a dollar bill so it's caught in the closed door. You should feel resistance when you pull the bill out. Repeat the test in several places. A gasket that does not pass the test or that is obviously cracked or torn should be replaced.

Temperature settings for refrigerator and freezer compartments are given arbitrary numbers by manufacturers (for example, 1 through 9, warmest to coldest). Generally, 37 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal for the refrigerator compartment and 0 degrees Fahrenheit for the freezer. If you suspect a problem, test the temperatures with a refrigerator or outdoor thermometer.

Clothes Washer

If you have not done so already, insert your clothes washer instruction booklet in an appropriate file, as noted above. Clean the water inlet filters and inspect hoses for leaks twice a year. Replace hoses if necessary.

If your washer ever fails to work, first check its power supply. Be sure the cord is plugged in and not defective. Next check the circuit breaker. Also, be sure the faucets are fully open and screens in the water inlet valve or hoses aren't clogged. For causes and remedies of these and other problems, see your instruction booklet.

Clothes Dryer

Vacuum lint from the dryer's ducts and surrounding areas twice a year. If your dryer doesn't do its job, be sure the cord is plugged in and isn't defective. Next, check the circuit breaker. After that, clean the lint trap and remove any lint from the exhaust duct with a vacuum or piece of wire.

If you have a gas dryer and it doesn't heat, have your gas company or a qualified professional inspect the pilot or adjust the air-gas ratio.

For causes and remedies of these and other problems, see your appliance manual.