

What to Do Before it Heats Up

Got a case of spring fever? Before heading to the greens or firing up the grill, you might want to first get your home ready for the warm months ahead:

Moisture monitoring. It's a good idea to monitor your basement's humidity and add a dehumidifier if necessary. High humidity in the basement can foster mold, rot and other structural problems.

Keep your cool. Now is a good time to bring in a professional to check out your air conditioner. The last thing you want is for the unit to go down just when the temperature heats up.

Rules on pools. If you're putting in a pool, be sure you know your local regulations about fences, locks and safety equipment. In addition to a barrier, consider also installing locks, alarms and safety covers to protect against anyone wandering into the water. If you already have a pool, inspect the fence's condition.

Scrub before grub. Before using your grill, thoroughly clean the surface with grease-cutting dishwashing detergent, or scrub with a brush or abrasive pad and then rinse. If you use a wire bristle brush, you'll want to make sure you've left no bristles behind, which could find their way onto food. If the bristles are starting to flatten, it's time to replace the brush.

Hit the deck. When you're gearing up for summer, don't forget the deck. Check for rot on the ledger board (where the deck attaches to the house), support posts and joists, deck boards, railings and stairs. You can do this by using a sharp tool; if it penetrates $\frac{1}{4}$ to a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, breaks off wood without splintering or the wood is soft, you may have decay. Or, better yet, hire a professional to inspect the deck.

You might also consider upgrading your insurance. You could get more coverage for watercraft or a trailer, for example, if you bought Kemper Prime Home Enhanced or Kemper Prime Home Elite instead of Kemper Prime Home Essentials*. And if you're putting in a pool or deck, you will want to make sure you have enough insurance to cover them. Ask your independent agent for more information.

* In NC, broader coverage comes with NC Extended Plus

Sources: Mutual Boiler Re; ENERGY STAR; Insurance Information Institute; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Hearth, Patio and Barbeque Association; North American Deck and Railing Association

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