

# 50plus Handyman



## Reducing maintenance costs

50plus Handyman's Roger Runswick looks at preventative maintenance

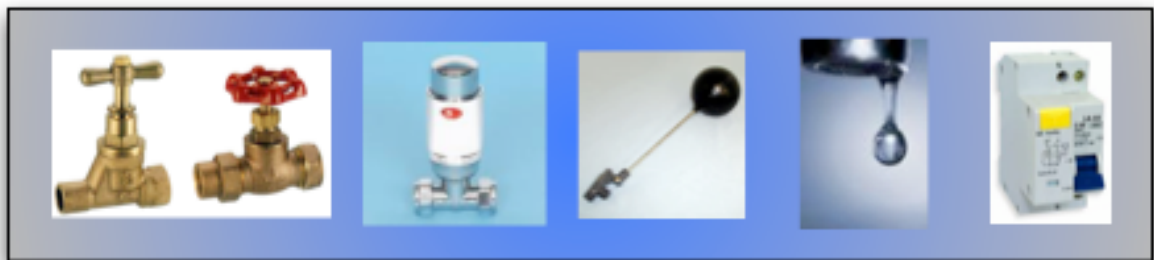
Householders often wait until something breaks and then pay for an emergency call out. Many costs can be avoided through preventative maintenance.

### Plumbing

Water is a key component in many insurance claims yet many householders don't know where to shut off the supply. Get to know:

- Where the stopcocks are. There should be at least one internal stopcock and one in the road or garden; if you have a water meter it's usually with it. Check stopcocks can be accessed, remain operational and are not screwed hard open but 'backed off' a little to prevent jamming.
- Similarly keep gate valves operational. These are inside the house, often in cupboards and are typically coloured red. You could need to operate these to e.g. change a tap washer.
- Ensure taps are not left to drip, particularly in hard water areas. Get dripping taps repaired sooner rather than later; a washer is cheaper than a new tap.
- Look after ball valves in tanks and loos. These should not allow water to fill to the overflow level, when water starts to drip or run out of an external overflow pipe.
- Ensure any tanks (usually in the roof) are covered and insulated and that the tank cover is well secured.

*Simple maintenance to everyday fittings helps prevent costly repairs*



### Heating

Boilers should be regularly maintained. Check whether an inhibitor has been added to water based systems to help prevent the build up a scale and sludge. Operate radiator valves at least annually to keep them functioning.

### Electrical

Electrical installations do deteriorate over time. Remember:

- The overall installation should be periodically inspected, a minimum of once every 10 years.
- Test RCDs in your consumer unit at least annually (they are the switch with the test button). If you don't have one it's time to think about replacing the fusebox/consumer unit.

- Test the operation of smoke (and heat/ carbon monoxide) detectors at least every 6 months.
- Checked for satisfactory operation of exterior lights in late Autumn.

### **Exterior**

Look out for:

- Gutters; keep them, hoppers and down pipes clear of debris. Remember to check any 'internal' gutters between pitched roof valleys on larger premises.
- Have flat roofs inspected regularly.
- Check any waterproofing such as leading is not loose.

In addition look after external décor and fences. Regular maintenance is cheaper than major repairs.

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