

South Texas Homeowner's Guide

Essential Home Maintenance Tips



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“South Texas Homeowner’s Guide: Essential Maintenance for Every Season”

Chapter Outline:

Introduction

- Why home maintenance matters
- Unique South Texas climate and building factors

Chapter 1: Understanding Your South Texas Home

- Common construction types in the region
- Challenges from humidity, heat, and soil movement

Chapter 2: Seasonal Maintenance Overview

- Spring: HVAC prep, roof checks, pest barriers
- Summer: Irrigation, shading, A/C efficiency
- Fall: Gutter clearing, insulation check, pest inspection
- Winter: Freeze prep (yes, rare but important), water heater check

Chapter 3: HVAC Maintenance

- Importance of twice-a-year servicing
- Filters, duct cleaning, and signs of trouble

Chapter 4: Roof & Gutter Care

- Sun damage to shingles
- Hurricane and hail readiness
- Gutter cleaning and drainage planning

Chapter 5: Pest Control in South Texas

- Termites, ants, scorpions, and rodents
- DIY tips vs when to call pros

Chapter 6: Foundation Health

- How clay soil affects your slab

- Signs of shifting
- Drainage strategies

Chapter 7: Plumbing & Water Systems

- Hard water effects
- Leak detection and prevention
- Preventing pipe freezes during cold snaps

Chapter 8: Electrical Safety

- Surge protection
- Panel inspections
- Outdoor wiring concerns

Chapter 9: Landscaping & Drainage

- Native plants for minimal maintenance
- Protecting your foundation from poor drainage

Chapter 10: Storm & Emergency Prep

- Hurricane kits and checklists
- Generator basics
- Roof tie-downs and boarding windows

Conclusion + Yearly Maintenance Calendar



➤ CHAPTER 1

Understanding Your South Texas Home



Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

Before you worry about what to maintain, understand what you're maintaining. Knowing how your home was built helps you protect it properly.

The South Texas Climate: Friend & Foe

South Texas is defined by extremes: **intense sun, heavy rains, clay-based soils, high humidity**, and the occasional cold snap. All of these impact your home's systems—from your foundation and roofing to plumbing and siding.

Common Home Types in the Region

Most homes in South Texas fall into a few key categories:

- Slab-on-grade foundations (vulnerable to soil movement)
- Masonry or stucco exteriors (susceptible to cracking/separation)
- Wood and fiber cement siding (can warp, crack, or separate if caulking and paint are not maintained)
- Composite or metal roofs (heat wear is common)
- Open attic spaces (can trap heat if not ventilated properly)

Understanding your home's build can help you anticipate issues:

- Foundation cracks? It might be soil shrinkage during droughts.
 - Roof damage? It could be UV breakdown or hail.
 - Drafty rooms? Poor attic insulation or leaky seals.
-

Clay Soil & Foundation Movement

One of the biggest concerns for South Texas homes is **expansive clay soil**, which swells when wet and shrinks when dry. This can shift your foundation, causing cracks, sticking doors, and misaligned windows.

What You Can Do:

- Maintain **even moisture** around the perimeter of your foundation.

- Ensure **gutters and downspouts** direct water away.
- Watch for early signs like interior cracks or door issues.

Inspector's Tip

Consider a regular drainage assessment—many homeowners don't realize poor grading is behind their foundation trouble.

Heavy Rain & Drainage

Even in drought-prone areas, **sudden heavy rain** can overwhelm systems and cause:

- Pooling around your foundation
- Roof leaks
- Siding rot
- Flooded crawlspaces (if present)

We'll show you in later chapters how to manage water efficiently—through grading, gutter maintenance, and proper caulking around penetrations.

Heat, UV & Roof Lifespan

South Texas sun can **age your roof fast**. UV radiation breaks down asphalt shingles and seals, especially on older homes.

What to watch for:

- Curling or brittle shingles
 - Exposed nail heads
 - Discoloration or moss/algae growth
-

Pest Pressure

Termites, carpenter ants, rodents, scorpions—yes, scorpions! South Texas pests thrive in our climate. Chapter 5 dives deep into DIY prevention and signs to look for.

Coming Up Next:

Chapter 2: Seasonal Maintenance Overview

Learn what to do every spring, summer, fall, and winter to protect your South Texas home.

 **Need an expert eye on your home?**

Book a home maintenance inspection with SA Inspect at
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CHAPTER 2

Seasonal Maintenance Overview



Your Year-Round Guide to Keeping a South Texas Home in Top Shape

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

"In South Texas, extreme weather shifts mean prevention is everything. Staying ahead of small issues season by season can save thousands in repairs."

Why Seasonal Maintenance Matters

South Texas doesn't have "typical" seasons—blistering summers, sudden spring rains, and the occasional winter freeze all take a toll on your home. By breaking your home maintenance into manageable seasonal tasks, you'll:

- Extend the life of your home's systems
 - Catch issues early
 - Keep your property efficient and safe
-

SPRING

Spring brings warmth, storms, and new pest activity. It's the best time to inspect damage from winter and prepare for hotter months.

Checklist:

-  Schedule HVAC servicing before the first 90° day
-  Clear gutters and downspouts
-  Check attic for signs of roof leaks or pests
-  **Flush your water heater** to remove sediment buildup
-  Inspect caulking around sinks, tubs, showers — **recaulk if cracked**
-  Check for termite activity around the foundation
-  Test irrigation systems and check for leaks
-  Trim vegetation away from siding and roof

 Inspector's Tip:

“Spring is the perfect time to flush your water heater. This removes mineral buildup that can reduce efficiency and damage the tank.”

 SUMMER

South Texas summers are brutal—keep your home cool and dry by focusing on airflow, shading, and moisture control.

Checklist:

-  Replace smaller HVAC filters monthly and for larger filters every 3-6 months
-  Inspect windows and door seals for air leaks
-  Check attic insulation and ensure proper ventilation
-  **Seal and caulk around outdoor wall penetrations** (vents, pipes, AC lines) **as well as windows and doors** to prevent air leaks, moisture intrusion, and pest entry
-  Power wash siding (especially fiber cement or wood)
-  Look for sun damage to siding, roof, and paint
-  Keep gutters clear if summer storms are common
-  **Water around the foundation as needed.** Due to the extreme heat in our summers, our soil can dry out which causes it to shrink and pull away from your foundation.

 Inspector's Tip:

“Caulking around your siding penetrations keeps pests and moisture out. Use high-quality exterior-grade sealant and check it every summer.”

 FALL

Fall is prep time for cooler weather and sudden cold snaps. Don't get caught off-guard—South Texas freezes may be rare, but they can do serious damage.

Checklist:

-  Clean gutters and downspouts (again)

-  Inspect roof for loose shingles or flashing damage
-  Check foundation for new cracks or soil movement
-  Inspect water heater.
-  **Recaulk bathroom fixtures if not done in spring**
-  Test outdoor lighting and security systems
-  Cover or insulate outdoor plumbing if freezes are forecast

 Inspector's Tip:

"In 2021, thousands of Texas homes froze because outdoor spigots weren't protected. A \$3 cover could save you thousands."

 WINTER

While winters are generally mild, deep cold snaps and heavy rains can happen. Use winter to check interior systems and prep for spring.

Checklist:

-  Inspect and clean dryer vents
-  Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
-  Check weatherstripping on doors and windows
-  Watch for condensation or moisture indoors
-  Check attic and crawl spaces for pests

 Inspector's Tip:

"During winter rodents are more likely to seek shelter inside. Check your attic, garage, and crawl space every winter."

 Bonus: Yearly Planner Snapshot

Season	Top Focus Area
Spring	Water systems, HVAC prep, caulking

Season	Top Focus Area
Summer	Roof, siding, exterior sealants, foundation
Fall	Gutters, insulation, freeze prep
Winter	Safety systems, interior checks

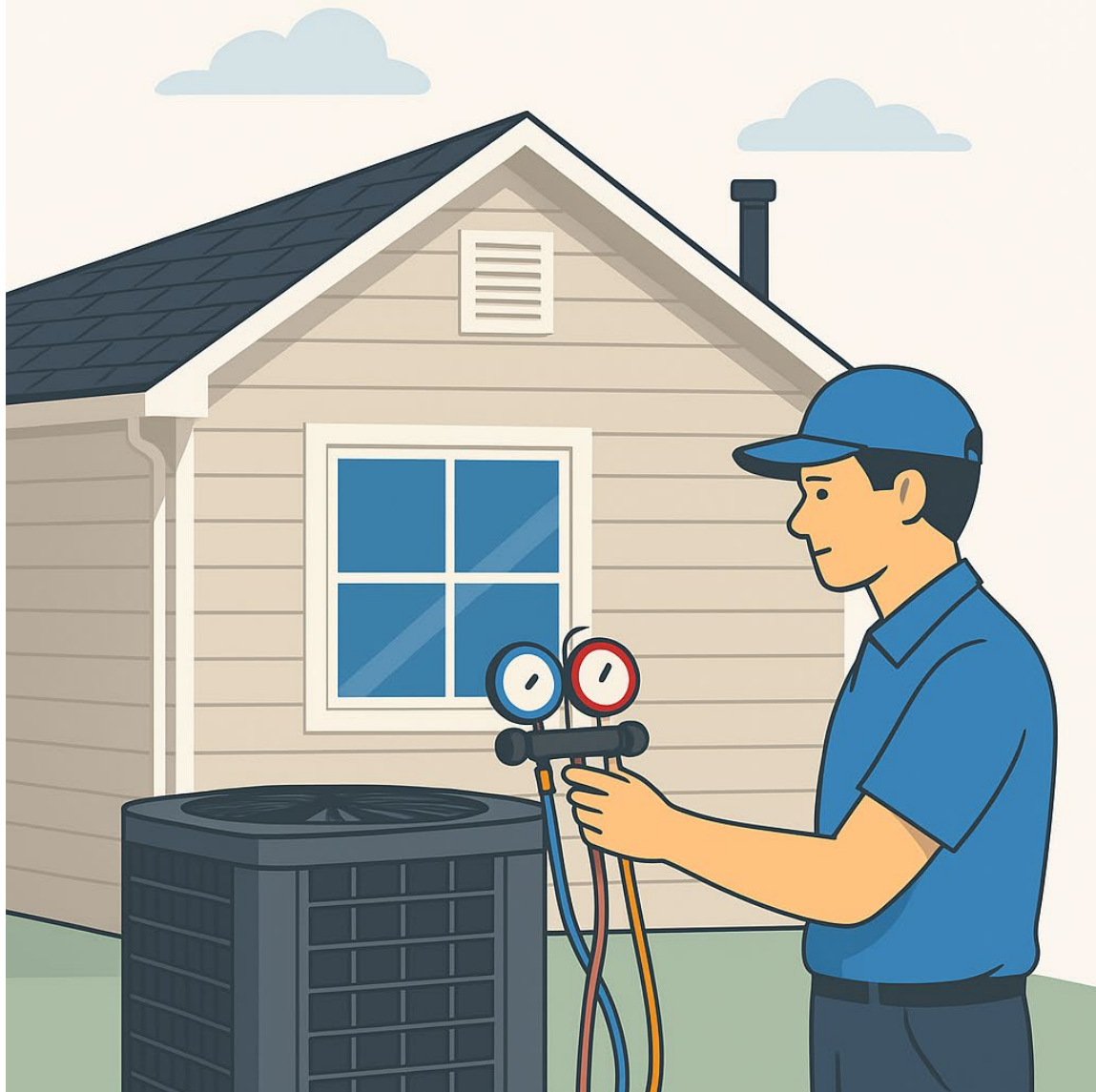
 Need a seasonal checkup?

Let SA Inspect help. Book a maintenance inspection at
www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460



Chapter 3

HVAC Maintenance



Keeping Cool (and Warm) in the South Texas Climate

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

“Your HVAC system does more than heat and cool—it controls humidity, air quality, and energy costs. A little maintenance goes a long way in South Texas.”

Why HVAC Maintenance Is Crucial in South Texas

With **summer temperatures soaring past 100°F** and high humidity levels nearly year-round, your HVAC system is one of the hardest-working appliances in your home. Neglecting it can lead to:

- Reduced efficiency and higher energy bills
 - Poor indoor air quality
 - System failure during extreme weather
 - Mold growth in ductwork and condensation areas
-

What Needs Maintenance?

Air Filters

Your first line of defense. Dirty filters reduce airflow, overwork your system, and decrease air quality.

How often to replace:

- **Standard filters:** every **month**
- **Larger filters:** every **3–6 months**, depending on use, pets, and allergies

Inspector's Tip:

“Mark filter change dates on your calendar or set a recurring phone reminder—it’s one of the simplest ways to extend HVAC life. If you purchase your filters on Amazon, they often send helpful reminders when it’s time to reorder or replace.”

Annual Professional Tune-Ups

Have your system serviced by a licensed HVAC technician **twice a year**, ideally in **spring** and **fall**.

A full tune-up should include:

- Checking refrigerant levels
 - Cleaning coils and blower components
 - Inspecting ductwork for leaks
 - Testing thermostat calibration
 - Flushing the condensate drain line
 - Inspecting electrical connections and safety controls
-

Ductwork and Vents

South Texas homes are often built with flexible or metal duct systems in the attic—where it gets hot fast. Poor insulation or loose seals here can waste energy.

What to do:

- Inspect ducts every 2–3 years
 - Seal leaks with mastic or foil-backed tape (not duct tape!)
 - Make sure vents are unobstructed and free of dust
-

Thermostat Tips

Smart thermostats can help regulate temps while you're away and reduce energy bills. Many utility companies in Texas offer rebates for upgrading, including CPS Energy.

Set-it-and-forget-it guidance:

- Summer: 72-78°F when home, 80°F away
- Winter: 68°F when home, 60°F away

Want to save even more?

CPS Energy offers a **My Thermostat Rewards** program where eligible customers may receive bill credits for allowing slight adjustments during peak usage times. Learn more here:

 www.cpsenergy.com/mythermostatrewards

 Disclaimer:

SA Inspect is not affiliated with CPS Energy and cannot guarantee eligibility, availability, or rebate amounts. Please check directly with CPS Energy for full program details.

 Humidity Control Matters

Humidity fuels mold, mildew, and musty odors. Your HVAC system should help manage it, but if indoor air feels sticky:

- Check that your condensate drain is clear
- Use ceiling fans to circulate air
- Consider a whole-home dehumidifier if problems persist

 Inspector's Tip:

“If you see rust around your indoor HVAC unit or water near the drain pan, that’s a red flag—have it inspected right away.”

 Outdoor Unit Care

That condenser outside your home is exposed to sun, dirt, leaves, and critters.

Maintenance Tips:

- Clear debris from the base monthly
 - Trim vegetation back at least 2 feet
 - Rinse the unit gently with a hose (no pressure washers!)
 - Check for wasp nests or ants around electrical connections
-

 Seasonal Maintenance Summary

Task	When to Do It
Replace Filters	Monthly / 3–6 months
Schedule Professional Tune-Up	Spring & Fall

Task	When to Do It
Check Outdoor Unit	Monthly
Inspect Ducts & Vents	Every 2–3 years
Monitor Condensate Drain	Quarterly

 **Want an expert to check your HVAC system's impact on your home?**

Book a home maintenance inspection with SA Inspect at
www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460



CHAPTER 4

Roof & Gutter Care



Protecting Your Home from the Top Down

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

“Your roof and gutters are your home’s first line of defense against heat, rain, hail, and pests. A simple inspection twice a year can prevent thousands in repair costs.”

Why Roof & Gutter Maintenance Matters in South Texas

From **scorching sun and UV exposure** to **hailstorms and heavy rain**, South Texas weather puts your roof and gutters to the test. Small issues—like a missing shingle or clogged downspout—can quickly escalate into major water damage or even foundation issues.

Common local threats:

- UV damage and heat expansion
 - High winds and flying debris
 - Algae/moss growth in shaded areas
 - Overflowing gutters during heavy storms
 - Pest entry through unsealed roof penetrations
-

ROOF MAINTENANCE

Visual Inspections

Walk the perimeter of your home, use **binoculars**, or even a **drone** to safely check for:

- Curling, cracked, or missing shingles
- Exposed or popped nail heads
- Damaged flashing (metal strips around vents and chimneys)
- Debris buildup on valleys or flat spots
- Sagging or soft spots along ridges or eaves

Safety Note:

Never walk on your roof unless you’re trained and equipped. Hire a pro if you suspect hidden damage or need a detailed inspection.

UV & Heat Wear

The Texas sun can rapidly age asphalt shingles. Over time, heat causes them to dry out, curl, and lose granules.

Signs of sun damage:

- Shiny bald patches
- Brittle or easily broken shingles
- Fading or discoloration

Inspector's Tip:

“South-facing roof slopes take the most punishment. If your roof is over 10 years old, have it checked annually—especially before storm season.”

Storm & Hail Damage

After a severe storm, inspect for:

- Dents in metal flashing or vents
- Granule loss in shingles
- Leaks in attic or ceiling
- Dislodged shingles

Keep documentation and photos for insurance purposes. A roof inspection by SA Inspect can help assess damage even before leaks appear.

Roof Penetrations & Pests

Vents, skylights, and chimneys are common pest entry points. Birds, squirrels, and insects can exploit loose flashing or gaps.

Make sure:

- All penetrations are sealed and flashed properly
- Vent screens are intact

- Debris isn't clogging roof exhausts
-

GUTTER MAINTENANCE

Clogged or damaged gutters can lead to:

- Roof edge rot
- Water intrusion at soffits or siding
- Foundation cracks from improper drainage

Clean & Inspect Twice a Year

-  Remove leaves, pine needles, and dirt (spring and fall)
 -  Check for sagging or detached sections
 -  Make sure downspouts extend 5 feet from the foundation
 -  Look for gaps between gutter and fascia
 -  Test with a hose to ensure flow
-

South Texas Drainage Challenges

With our region's heavy clay soil, poor drainage can cause **foundation movement**. Gutters play a huge role in preventing water from pooling near your slab.

Inspector's Tip:

"Your gutters aren't just for your roof—they protect your foundation. Keep them clear and flowing, especially before spring rains or hurricane season."

Tree Trimming & Debris Prevention

Overhanging trees drop leaves and branches, clogging gutters and damaging shingles.

What to do:

- Trim back limbs 6–10 feet from the roofline
- Remove branches that rub or drop sap on shingles

- Consider installing gutter guards if leaf buildup is frequent

Seasonal Roof & Gutter Planner

Task	Frequency
Visual roof inspection	Spring & Fall
Gutter cleaning	Spring & Fall
Tree trimming	Annually or as needed
Professional roof check	Every 1–2 years

Worried about what you can't see from the ground?

Schedule a roof and gutter inspection with SA Inspect today:
www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460

CHAPTER 5

Pest Control in South Texas



Protecting Your Home from the Unwanted Invaders

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

"In South Texas, pests aren't just a nuisance — they can cause real damage to your home's structure and safety. Consistent maintenance is your best defense."

Why Pest Control Matters in South Texas

Warm temperatures, high humidity, and mild winters create ideal conditions for pests to thrive nearly year-round. Without regular inspection and prevention, your home could face:

- Structural damage (from termites or rodents)
 - Health risks (from droppings, stings, and bacteria)
 - Fire hazards (rodents chewing electrical wires)
 - Decreased property value
-

Most Common Pests in the Region

Termites

- Thrive in humid soil and wood structures
- Cause **billions in damage** annually nationwide
- Often go undetected until it's too late

Signs to watch for:

- Mud tubes along foundations or walls
- Hollow-sounding wood
- Swarming insects near windows in spring
- Discarded wings indoors
- **Frass piles** (small wood shavings or droppings near baseboards or wall gaps)

Inspector's Tip:

"Schedule a professional termite inspection every 1–2 years. Early detection saves thousands."

Rodents (Mice & Rats)

- Enter through gaps as small as a dime
- Often nest in attics, garages, and under sinks
- Can chew wiring, insulation, and stored items

Prevention tips:

- Seal holes and wall penetrations with steel mesh or foam
 - Keep food sealed and pet food stored off the floor
 - Trim trees away from the roofline
-

Scorpions & Spiders

- Seek cool, dark places (attics, closets, under decks)
- Scorpions are especially active in rocky or wooded areas
- Most bites/stings are not dangerous, but still painful

Prevention tips:

- Use yellow bug lights outdoors to reduce insect activity
 - Seal window/door gaps and baseboards
 - Avoid leaving clothes or towels on the floor overnight
-

Ants & Roaches

- Ants are relentless foragers; fire ants can be aggressive
- Roaches thrive in damp areas like kitchens and bathrooms

What helps:

- Keep kitchen clean and dry
- Fix leaky plumbing
- Caulk cracks behind appliances and cabinets

- Use bait traps for targeted control
-

Other Intruders

- **Wasps, silverfish, and centipedes** are also common indoors
 - **Birds or bats** may nest in attics or under eaves
-

Home Maintenance Tips for Pest Prevention

1. Seal gaps around doors, windows, and wall penetrations
2. Keep your yard trimmed and free of debris
3. Store firewood at least 20 feet from the home
4. Inspect attics and crawlspaces seasonally
5. Use weatherstripping and door sweeps
6. Repair broken screens on windows and vents
7. Caulk around baseboards, tubs, sinks, and utility lines

Inspector's Tip:

“The same caulking you use to seal siding and fixtures can also block pest entry. Keep a tube of paintable exterior sealant handy.”

When to Call a Pro

- You see termite activity or signs of nesting
 - You hear scratching in the attic or walls
 - You've tried DIY treatments with no success
 - You're buying or selling a home (inspection required)
-

Pest Prevention Calendar

Task	Frequency
Termite inspection	Every 1–2 years
Seal gaps and caulk	Spring & Fall
Yard debris removal	Monthly
Attic/crawlspace check	Seasonally
Pest control spray (if used)	Quarterly

 Concerned about what's crawling around your home?

Book a pest check up from Stride Pest Control:

www.stridepestcontrol.com | (210) 547-8410

Chapter 6: Foundation Health



Safeguarding Your Home from the Ground Up

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

"In South Texas, your foundation is under constant pressure from shifting soil and water. Small cracks can turn into major structural problems if ignored."

Why Foundation Care Is Critical in South Texas

South Texas homes are commonly built on **slab-on-grade foundations**, which are vulnerable to the **expansive clay soils** found throughout the region. These soils **shrink during drought** and **swell during heavy rains**, putting extreme stress on your foundation.

Uncontrolled water around your home is one of the biggest culprits behind:

- Foundation movement and cracking
 - Door and window misalignment
 - Uneven floors or broken tiles
 - Interior wall cracking or separation
-

Signs of Foundation Trouble

Keep an eye out for:

- Cracks in interior walls, especially above doors and windows
- Doors or windows that stick or don't latch
- Gaps forming between walls and ceilings/floors
- Cracks in exterior brick, stucco, or siding
- Sloping or uneven flooring
- Separation at expansion joints and/or windows
- Moisture pooling near the slab or in flowerbeds

Inspector's Tip:

"Diagonal cracks or cracks wider than 1/8 inch may indicate active movement. Don't wait—get it checked."

Water is the Enemy (and the Cure)

Inconsistent soil moisture causes expansion and contraction that stresses the slab. The key? **Keep the moisture level consistent** around your home.

Moisture Management Tips:

- Install and maintain **gutters** and **downspouts** to route water away
 - Keep plants and mulch **6–12 inches from the foundation**
 - Use soaker hoses in dry months to maintain even moisture
 - Grade soil to **slope away from the foundation**
 - Avoid overwatering nearby landscaping
-

Drainage Do's and Don'ts

Do

Ensure at least a 5% slope away from home

Extend downspouts 5 feet from the house

Use rock beds or drip edges for drainage

Don't

Let water pool near the slab

Let sprinklers hit the foundation

Plant thirsty trees too close to the home

Inspector's Tip:

“Clay soils move the most when wet-dry cycles are extreme. During droughts, use a soaker hose 18–24 inches from the foundation to maintain stability.”

Landscaping Considerations

What you plant matters:

- Keep trees at least **15–20 feet away** from the house
- Use **native drought-tolerant plants** to reduce irrigation
- Avoid large root systems near the foundation
- Don't allow ivy or vines to climb foundation walls — they trap moisture

Foundation Maintenance Schedule

Task	Frequency
Inspect foundation perimeter	Quarterly
Check grading and drainage	Spring & Fall
Use soaker hose in dry seasons	As needed (weekly)
Watch for new wall/ceiling cracks	Monthly visual check
Schedule professional inspection	Every 1–2 years

Noticed cracks or shifting in your home?

Book a foundation-focused inspection with SA Inspect today:
www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460

Chapter 7: Plumbing & Water Systems



Keeping Water Flowing Where It Belongs

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

"In South Texas, hard water, aging pipes, and occasional freezes can all affect your plumbing. Preventive maintenance is key to avoiding costly leaks and water damage."

What Makes South Texas Plumbing Unique?

Homeowners in South Texas deal with:

- **Hard water** that leads to mineral buildup
- **Occasional freezes** that can burst pipes
- **High summer demand** on water heaters and irrigation
- **Slab foundations** that can hide slow leaks under the home

Whether your home is 2 years or 20 years old, keeping your plumbing in top shape can save water, money, and repairs.

Flushing Your Water Heater

Hard water is especially common in our region, and it causes **mineral deposits** to collect in your water heater tank. Left unchecked, this can reduce efficiency, shorten lifespan, and cause popping or rumbling sounds during use.

How to Flush a Tank-Style Water Heater:

1. Turn off the water heater (electric breaker or gas valve)
2. Turn off the cold-water supply valve
3. Connect a garden hose to the drain valve at the base of the tank
4. Run the hose to a drain or driveway and open the valve
5. Let it drain fully, then briefly turn on cold water to flush sediments
6. Close the valve, remove hose, refill the tank, and turn the unit back on

Inspector's Tip:

"Flush your water heater at least once a year. If you hear banging or popping, it's overdue."

⚠️ **Safety Note:**

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions or hire a professional. For tankless systems, use descaling kits annually.

🔧 **Leak Detection & Prevention**

Plumbing leaks aren't always dramatic. Even a pinhole leak behind a wall can lead to:

- Mold and mildew
- Structural wood rot
- Rising water bills

🔍 **What to Check:**

- Water stains on ceilings or baseboards
 - Soft spots in floors near tubs or toilets
 - Wet patches around exterior hose bibs
 - Running toilets or low water pressure
-

🔧 **Caulking & Sealing Interior Fixtures**

Leaks around tubs, sinks, and showers often start with **failing caulk**, not broken pipes.

✅ **Caulking Checklist:**

- Check for **gaps or cracks** around tubs, backsplashes, and sinks
- Use **mold-resistant, paintable silicone caulk** in wet areas
- Scrape away old caulk before applying new
- Smooth the bead with a damp finger or caulk tool

🧰 **Inspector's Tip:**

"Check your kitchen and bathroom caulking at least twice a year. Cracked caulk invites water behind walls where mold loves to grow."

❄️ **Freeze Protection (Yes, Even Here)**

While freezes are rare in South Texas, when they happen, they're often severe. Homes here aren't always built for it — and exposed plumbing is a major weak point.

 Winterizing Essentials:

- Cover all exterior hose bibs with insulated foam covers
- Disconnect garden hoses and drain them
- Wrap exposed outdoor pipes with insulation or heat tape
- If freezing is expected:
 - Open cabinet doors under sinks to let warm air circulate
 - Let faucets drip slowly overnight

 Plumbing Maintenance Schedule

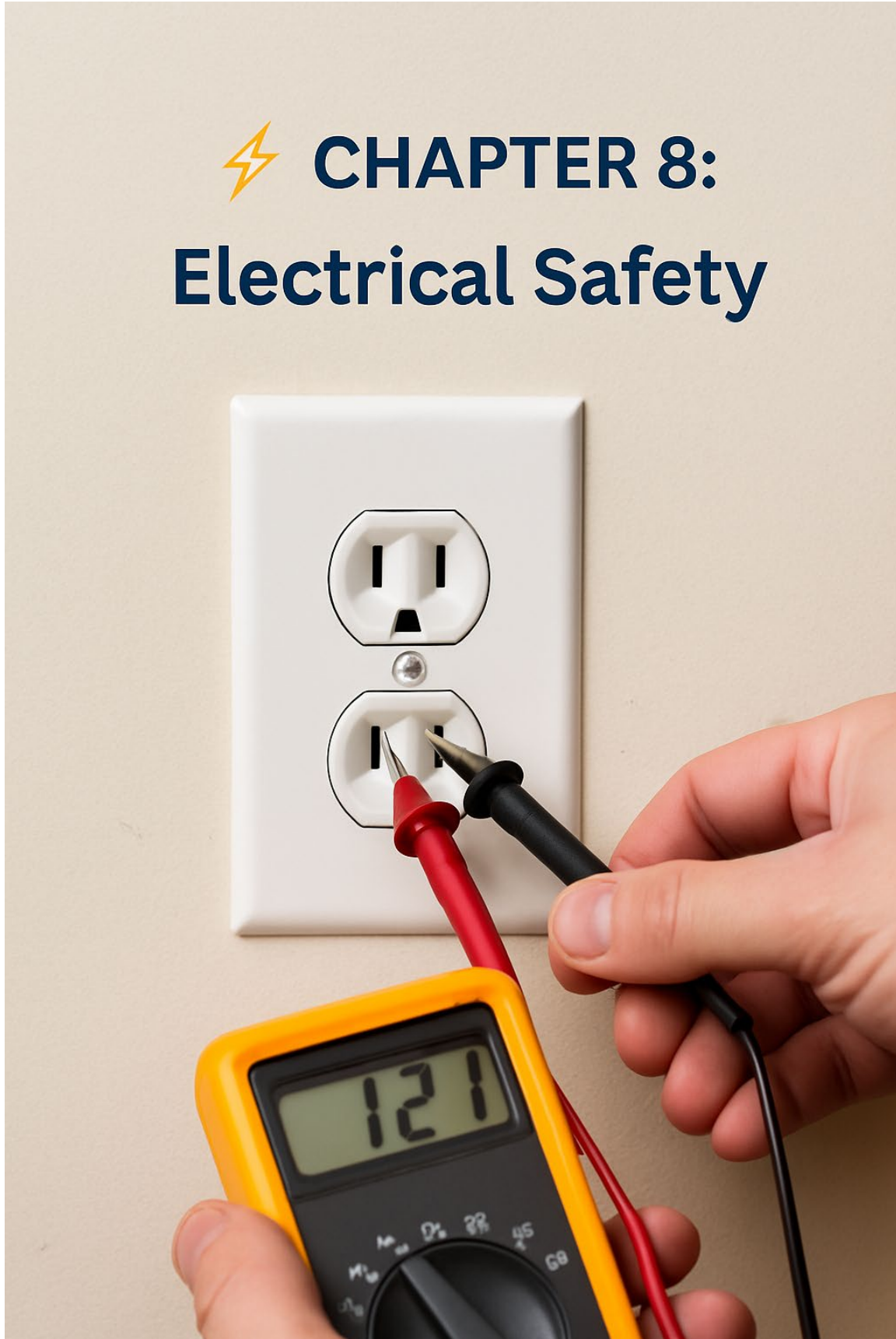
Task	Frequency
Check for visible leaks	Monthly
Flush water heater	Annually
Inspect caulking in wet areas	Spring & Fall
Winterize exterior plumbing	As needed (before freeze)
Schedule plumbing inspection	Every 1–2 years

 Need help spotting plumbing problems before they become disasters?

SA Inspect provides detailed inspections with moisture detection tools.

www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460

⚡ CHAPTER 8: Electrical Safety



Protecting Your Home from Shocks, Shorts, and Surges

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

“Most electrical issues start small—until they don’t. If your lights flicker, breakers trip, or outlets feel warm, it’s time to act.”

Why Electrical Maintenance Matters

South Texas homes face a mix of electrical challenges:

- **Power surges** from lightning or brownouts
- **High summer demand** on HVAC and appliances
- **Rodent activity** in attics chewing on wiring
- **Aging systems** in older homes not built for modern load

Unchecked issues can lead to:

- Electrical fires
 - Damaged electronics
 - Shock hazards
 - System failure when you need it most
-

Signs of Electrical Trouble

Don’t ignore these red flags:

- Flickering or dimming lights
- Breakers that trip repeatedly
- Buzzing sounds from outlets or switches
- Outlets or plugs that feel warm
- Burning or fishy odors near electrical panels
- Sparking when plugging/unplugging devices

Inspector's Tip:

“Smells, heat, or noise from outlets are urgent signs—shut off power to that area and call an electrician immediately.”

DIY Checks Every Homeowner Can Do

While most electrical work should be done by licensed pros, here's what you can check safely:

Monthly/Seasonal:

- Test GFCI outlets (press “Test” and “Reset” buttons)
- Test AFCI breakers by pressing the “Test” button on the breaker in your panel — it should trip and be reset
- Look for discolored or cracked outlet covers
- Check for overloaded power strips
- Ensure attic/crawl space wiring is clean and free of nests

Inspector's Tip:

“AFCI breakers detect dangerous arc faults before they spark a fire. Test them monthly, especially in bedrooms and living areas.

Annually:

- Inspect your **breaker panel** for rust, scorch marks, or loose labeling
 - Walk your home and count how many outlets are being overloaded (2+ devices per socket = time to reconsider)
 - Consider scheduling a **professional infrared scan** to detect hidden hot spots
-

Surge Protection Strategies

South Texas storms can create **unpredictable power surges** that fry sensitive electronics.

What You Can Do:

- Install **whole-house surge protection** at your electrical panel
- Use point-of-use surge protectors for TVs, computers, appliances

- Unplug sensitive devices during lightning storms
- Have your panel inspected every few years to ensure safe grounding

 Inspector's Tip:

"A \$15 surge protector can save thousands in fried electronics. Replace them every few years—older ones silently stop working."

 Exterior & Garage Electrical Checks

Don't forget outdoor and garage circuits:

- GFCI outlets should be **weatherproof and covered**
 - Outdoor lights and fans should be rated for wet locations
 - Look for exposed wiring from sun, pests, or weed trimmers
 - Test garage door outlets and lighting circuits
-

 Electrical Safety Schedule

Task	Frequency
Test GFCI outlets	Monthly
Inspect surge protectors	Every 2–3 years
Visual check of breaker panel	Annually
Outdoor outlet inspection	Spring & Fall
Professional system inspection	Every 3–5 years

 Worried about strange smells, flickering lights, or buzzing outlets?

Let SA Inspect give your electrical system a full safety check.

www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460



CHAPTER 9:

LANDSCAPING & DRAINAGE



Designing a Yard That Protects Your Home

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

“A beautiful yard means nothing if it funnels water toward your slab. Good drainage and smart landscaping protect your foundation as much as any building material.”

Why Drainage Matters in South Texas

Our region's **expansive clay soils** are especially sensitive to moisture changes. Poor drainage can lead to:

- Foundation movement and cracking
- Pooling water near the slab or flowerbeds
- Mold or mildew at the base of walls
- Flooding in crawlspaces (if present)
- Mosquito breeding grounds

The solution starts with thoughtful landscaping and consistent grading.

Grading & Soil Slope

Your yard should slope **away from your foundation on all sides**. A minimum slope of **5%**—about **6 inches of drop over the first 10 feet**—is ideal for keeping water away from your slab. In areas where proper slope isn't possible, or in larger yards, **swales** (shallow, gently sloped ditches) can be used to **channel surface water away from the home** effectively.

Signs of improper grading:

- Water pooling near the house after rain
- Erosion trails around the slab
- Grass dying or staying overly soggy
- Gaps forming between the soil and foundation

Fixes may include:

- Adding soil to raise low spots
- Installing rock or gravel drip edges

- Creating swales — shallow, landscaped ditches that direct water away
- Regrading large areas with professional help

 Inspector's Tip:

“Check your grading every year. Soil settles, and what drained properly last spring may be a problem today.”

 Smart Landscaping Practices

 Choose the Right Plants:

- Use **native South Texas plants** that require less water
- Avoid water-hungry plants near the foundation
- Install **mulch beds** carefully — keep mulch 6–12 inches away from the slab
- Use **groundcover** to reduce erosion

 Tree & Shrub Placement:

- Plant large trees at least **15–20 feet from your home**
- Avoid aggressive root systems (oak, sycamore, silver maple) near the foundation
- Trim branches away from roof and gutters

 Landscape Drainage Systems:

If water problems persist, consider:

- Swales – gently sloped, shallow trenches that redirect surface water away from the home; can be integrated with grass or rock for a natural look
- French drains – buried perforated pipes wrapped in gravel that collect and redirect subsurface water
- Catch basins or pop-up emitters to collect water from downspouts and move it safely away
- Dry creek beds – decorative stone-lined channels that carry runoff during storms
- Rain barrels – collect roof runoff to reduce foundation saturation and support garden watering

Inspector's Tip:

“Swales and French drains are ideal for handling recurring surface water in flat or clay-heavy yards. A well-designed system keeps water moving where it belongs.”

Irrigation System Tips

An inefficient irrigation system can overwater areas near your slab and increase the risk of foundation issues.

Best Practices:

- Adjust sprinkler heads to avoid spraying the foundation
 - Water early in the morning or late evening to reduce evaporation
 - Don't let flower beds trap moisture near walls
 - Use drip irrigation where possible for better control
-

Landscape & Drainage Maintenance Schedule

Task	Frequency
Check grading and soil slope	Annually (Spring)
Inspect irrigation coverage	Spring & Fall
Trim trees/shrubs near home	Seasonally
Clean gutters and downspouts	Spring & Fall
Monitor for erosion or pooling	After major storms

Need help evaluating your yard's impact on your foundation?

SA Inspect can assess grading, drainage, and landscaping risk factors during your inspection.
www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460

 CHAPTER 10:
Storm & Emergency
Prep



Getting Your Home and Family Ready for the Unexpected

Inspector's Tip from SA Inspect

"In South Texas, it's not a question of if storms will come — it's when. Preparing now reduces stress later."

Why Emergency Prep Matters in South Texas

South Texas homes are vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards:

- **Tropical storms and hurricanes** along the Gulf
- **High wind events and hail**
- **Localized flash flooding**
- **Occasional winter freezes**
- **Power outages** due to extreme heat or storm damage

Even if your home isn't directly in a floodplain or coastal area, storms can bring wind, rain, and water damage far inland.

Hurricane & Storm Prep Checklist

Before storm season:

-  Inspect roof and secure loose shingles
-  Clear gutters and downspouts
-  Trim tree limbs away from roof and windows
-  Test sump pumps (if applicable)
-  Seal exterior penetrations with caulk or foam
-  Have sandbags or water barriers on hand (if in flood-prone area)

When a storm is approaching:

-  Secure or bring inside patio furniture, grills, and lawn décor
-  Board or shutter windows (plywood or storm panels)

-  Fill bathtubs and jugs with clean water
-  Charge backup batteries and portable power stations
-  Fuel up vehicles and generators
-  Move valuables to higher areas of the home

 Inspector's Tip:

“Even if you’re inland, don’t skip prep. Hurricane Harvey caused major damage hundreds of miles from the coast.”

 Freeze Prep for South Texas

Freezes may be rare, but when they happen, they catch homes off guard. Frozen pipes are a leading cause of water damage.

 Freeze Protection Steps:

- Cover exterior hose bibs with foam covers
 - Insulate exposed outdoor pipes or use heat tape
 - Open cabinets under sinks to allow warm air in
 - Let faucets drip slowly during freezing nights
 - Disconnect and drain garden hoses
 - Keep garage doors closed to protect water heaters or laundry areas
-

 Backup Power & Supplies

 Prepare for outages with:

- Battery-powered lights, not candles
- Surge protectors for electronics
- Power banks for phones and medical devices
- Portable generators (store fuel safely and run outdoors only)
- Extra batteries, chargers, and a solar-powered radio

Home Emergency Kit

Every home should have a basic 3-day supply of:

- Drinking water (1 gallon per person per day)
- Non-perishable food and manual can opener
- First aid kit and medications
- Flashlights and headlamps
- Wet wipes and sanitation supplies
- Copies of important documents
- Pet food and care items if applicable

Tip:

Store emergency supplies in a sturdy waterproof bin, and check expiration dates twice a year.

After the Storm: What to Check

- Roof for missing shingles or damaged flashing
 - Attic for water intrusion
 - Walls and ceilings for new water stains
 - GFCI outlets and breakers for safe power restoration
 - Yard for tree damage or shifting soil
 - Gutters and drainage paths for blockages
-

Need a post-storm inspection to assess damage or safety?

SA Inspect is here to help after the weather clears.

www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460



Conclusion:
Protect,
Preserve, and
Plan Ahead

Owning a home in South Texas comes with its challenges — intense heat, shifting soils, heavy storms, and the occasional deep freeze. But with the right knowledge and a proactive approach, your home can thrive for decades.

This guide is designed to give you the tools, confidence, and reminders to:

- Prevent small issues before they become expensive repairs
- Maintain comfort, safety, and efficiency
- Protect your biggest investment from the unique demands of our region

At SA Inspect, we're committed to helping South Texas homeowners feel confident in their homes — not just at closing, but year after year.

If you're ever unsure, or want peace of mind, schedule a **seasonal home inspection**. We'll help you spot what others miss.



Remember:

A well-maintained home is a safe, efficient, and valuable home — and it all starts with small, consistent steps.



South Texas Home Maintenance: Yearly Checklist

Task	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Replace HVAC filters	✓ Monthly or 3–6 months	✓	✓	✓
Schedule HVAC service	✓		✓	
Flush water heater	✓			
Inspect roof & gutters	✓		✓	
Clean & test gutters/downspouts	✓	✓ after storms	✓	
Caulk tubs, sinks, fixtures	✓		✓	
Seal outdoor penetrations (vents, pipes, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	

Task	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Test GFCI & AFCI breakers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trim trees away from roof	✓		✓	
Inspect grading & soil slope	✓		✓	
Check for signs of pests	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inspect attic & crawl spaces		✓	✓	✓
Test smoke & CO detectors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Check irrigation system	✓	✓		
Prepare for storm season	✓	✓		
Freeze protection (pipes, spigots, etc.)				✓

 Ready to stay ahead of home issues all year long?

Book a seasonal or annual inspection with SA Inspect:

www.sainspect.com | (210) 548-1460