Texas Home Preparedness & Preventative Maintenance

Royal Roofing Construction · Serving Austin and the Rio Grande Valley

Five practical checklists help Texas homeowners and renters prepare for freeze, flood, heat and outages, reduce common risks, and recognize when a task stops being DIY. Do the Monthly list every month and the season list before each season. Keep the Emergency list current all year.

Stop now: If you smell gas, hear hissing, smell burning from an outlet or panel, or see water near live electrical, leave first, then call the gas utility or 911 from outside. Do not touch switches.

How to use these lists

List	When	What it covers
Spring Ready	Mar–May	Hail, flash floods, severe storms, drainage
Summer Ready	Jun–Sep	100°F+ heat, AC failure, grid strain and outages, drought soil
Winter Ready	Nov–Feb	Hard freezes, burst pipes, ice storms, outages
Emergency Ready	All year	Hurricanes (Rio Grande Valley, Jun–Nov), tornadoes, floods, multi-day outages
Monthly Home Care	Every month	Fire, leaks, energy waste, small problems that grow

Levels **DIY**: Safe for most people at ground level with basic tools. No panels, no gas lines, no climbing onto a roof. **Handyman**: A handyman visit: caulk and seal work, hard-to-reach cleaning, minor repairs, loose rails and gates. Royal RC can handle these. **Specialist**: Licensed or specialty trade work such as roofing, electrical, HVAC, plumbing inside walls, foundation and large trees. If a job is outside what Royal RC does, we will tell you so.

Tasks tagged with two levels (for example DIY / Handyman) start as DIY and move to the second level when the notes say so.

If a task means opening a panel, cutting into a wall, climbing onto a roof, or touching a gas line, stop. Photograph it, write down the date, and call for help.

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Monthly Home Care

Safety, leaks and energy · Every month

Regular monthly checks can help spot fire risks, leaks and maintenance needs early. Time needed varies by home and task. Pick the same day every month, such as the first Saturday.

	Area	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Life safety	Press TEST on every smoke and CO alarm	**DIY**	Smoke alarms: replace at 10 years. CO alarms and batteries: follow manufacturer instructions and end-of-life date; may be sooner. Never disable alarms.
☐	Life safety	Glance at the fire extinguisher gauge	**DIY**	Needle in the green. Know where it is. Replace if the needle is out of the green.
☐	Life safety	Press TEST then RESET on GFCI outlets (kitchen, baths, garage, exterior)	**DIY**	If one will not reset or trips again right away, do not use that outlet. Have a qualified electrician look at it.
☐	HVAC and energy	Check the HVAC filter; replace if dirty (monthly in summer, every 1–3 months otherwise)	**DIY**	The single most useful task on this list. Know your filter size and write it on the filter frame.
☐	HVAC and energy	Keep furniture and rugs off supply and return vents; vacuum the grilles	**DIY**	Blocked vents raise bills and cause hot and cold rooms.
☐	HVAC and energy	Check the accessible AC condensate drain line and pan	**DIY**	For water in the pan or a blocked drain, call HVAC. Follow equipment instructions; do not mix cleaners or open equipment.
☐	Plumbing	Look under sinks, behind toilets and around the water heater for drips, stains or soft cabinet floors	**DIY Handyman**	Slow leaks cause rot and mold. Active drip: shut off the valve under the fixture, then call a handyman or plumber.
☐	Plumbing	Run water in unused sinks and tubs; flush rarely used toilets	**DIY**	Keeps traps full so sewer gas stays out.
☐	Plumbing	Clear hair and debris from shower and tub drains	**DIY**	Prevents clogs and overflow damage to floors.
☐	Appliances	Clean the dryer lint filter every load; check that the vent flap opens when the dryer runs	**DIY Handyman**	Lint is a leading cause of house fires. Have the full duct cleaned once a year (handyman visit).
☐	Appliances	Clean the range hood filter	**DIY**	Grease buildup is a fire risk.
☐	Appliances	Check refrigerator at 37–40°F and freezer at 0°F; test door seals with a dollar bill	**DIY**	Bill slides out easily means a worn seal and wasted energy.
☐	Electrical	Check extension cords and power strips for cracks, heat or scorch marks	**DIY Specialist (electrician)**	Replace damaged cords. Never daisy-chain strips. Scorched outlet or a breaker that trips repeatedly: stop and call a licensed electrician.
☐	Home exterior	Walk the property: loose railings, trip hazards, burned-out exterior lights, soil settling near the foundation	**DIY Handyman**	Anything that moves when you push on it (rails, steps, gates) is a handyman repair.
☐	Home exterior	Test the garage door auto-reverse with a 2×4 under the door	**DIY**	If it does not reverse, stop using the opener and call for service.
☐	Water	Read the water meter before and after two hours with nothing running	**DIY Specialist (plumber)**	If the dial moved, you have a hidden leak. Call a plumber.

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Spring Ready

Flood, hail, storms, drainage · March–May

Texas spring brings hail, flash floods and fast-moving storms. Do this list in March, then re-check after every major storm.

Water and drainage

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Clear gutters and downspouts of leaves and debris	**DIY (ground level)** **Handyman (second story or roof edge)**	Water should run freely. Crushed or disconnected downspouts: handyman repair.
☐	Make sure downspouts empty at least 6 feet from the foundation	**DIY**	Add a flexible extension if water pools by the wall.
☐	Clear yard drains, French drains, window wells and low spots	**DIY**	Critical before heavy rain, especially near creeks and in low lots.
☐	Check that soil slopes away from the house (about 6 inches of drop over the first 10 feet)	**DIY** **Specialist (grading or foundation)**	Add compacted soil for small settling. Regrading more than a few inches: call a grading or foundation specialist.
☐	Test the sump pump if you have one: pour a bucket of water into the pit	**DIY** **Specialist (plumber)**	Pump should start and empty the pit. Humming without pumping: call a plumber. A battery backup is recommended in flood-prone areas.
☐	Look at the foundation perimeter and seal hairline cracks	**DIY (hairline)** **Specialist (widening, stair-step or horizontal cracks)**	Photograph any crack with a coin or ruler for scale. Doors or windows that start sticking can mean soil movement.
☐	Check for white mineral deposits, stains or damp spots on garage and slab-edge walls	**DIY (look)** **Specialist (waterproofing)**	Active seepage: call a waterproofing specialist.

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Hail, wind and roof

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Photograph the roof, gutters, AC fins, siding and fence from the ground, with the date, before storm season	**DIY**	Dated photos give you a record of what your roof and exterior looked like before any storm.
☐	Check the roof from the ground or with binoculars: missing or lifted shingles, exposed nails, bent flashing, dented vents	**DIY (look only)** **Specialist (any repair)**	Do not climb on the roof. Missing shingles or daylight in the attic: call a roofer.
☐	After hail or high wind: walk the property and photograph damage, note the date, then call your insurer	**DIY**	Check gutters, AC fins, siding, window screens, vehicles and fences.
☐	Trim limbs away from the roof and power lines	**DIY (small)** **Specialist (large trees or near lines)**	Never trim near power lines yourself. Call the utility.
☐	Check exterior caulk around windows, doors, pipes and trim; re-caulk gaps	**DIY (small gaps)** **Handyman (gaps wider than ¼ inch or soft wood)**	Texas heat cycles crack caulk every few years.
☐	Check the attic and ceilings for brown stains, damp insulation or daylight	**DIY (look from the attic hatch only)** **Specialist (roofer)**	Active drip or spreading stains: call a roofer.

Interior and systems

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	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Schedule an AC tune-up before the summer rush	**Specialist (HVAC)**	If the AC does not cool within 15 minutes of first startup, call for service.
☐	Clean the dryer duct and bathroom exhaust fan covers	**DIY** **Handyman (full duct cleaning)**	Lint and moisture buildup are fire and mold risks.
☐	Repair or replace torn window and door screens	**DIY (patch)** **Handyman (full rescreen)**	Keeps insects out as the weather warms.
☐	Check decks, fences and railings for cracked boards, loose rails or rotted posts	**DIY (look)** **Handyman (repair)**	Push on rails. Any movement is a safety repair.
☐	Look for termite mud tubes, wood damage or swarms after heavy rains	**DIY (look)** **Specialist (pest control)**	Photograph and call a pest control company.
☐	Sign up for flash flood and severe weather alerts (county emergency alerts, NOAA Weather Radio, phone alerts)	**DIY**	Know your flood risk: homeowners insurance usually does not cover flood.

After a hail or storm event

Photograph damage first, then cover openings with a tarp if it is safe. Take your time and get more than one written estimate before signing anything with a door-knocking contractor. Texas law does not allow a contractor to waive, absorb or rebate your insurance deductible.

For questions about your insurance policy or a claim, contact your carrier or a licensed professional. This guide helps you document your own property; it does not advise on claims.

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Summer Ready

HVAC, heat, outages · June–September

The goal is to keep the house cool without overloading the AC, and to be ready if the power goes out in 100°F+ weather. Start in May, before the first heat wave.

Cooling system and energy

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Replace or clean the AC filter every month in heavy use	DIY	A dirty filter is the top cause of weak airflow and frozen coils.
☐	Keep 2 feet clear around the outdoor condenser; remove leaves and stored items	DIY	Clear loose debris safely. Leave rinsing, electrical isolation and opening equipment to HVAC. Follow manufacturer instructions. No pressure washer.
☐	Run the AC for 15 minutes and test the thermostat up and down	DIY Specialist (HVAC)	Should respond within minutes. No response or strange noises: call an HVAC technician.
☐	Check the condensate drain line and pan	DIY Specialist (HVAC)	Leaks or a blockage: call HVAC. Follow equipment instructions; do not mix cleaners or open equipment.
☐	Look for ice on the refrigerant lines or indoor coil	DIY (look) Specialist (HVAC)	Ice means low airflow or a refrigerant problem. Turn the AC off, let it thaw, and call HVAC.
☐	Check accessible ducts for disconnected sections, holes or missing insulation	DIY (small gaps, with approved tape or mastic) Specialist (HVAC, major repairs)	Hot attics make duct leaks very costly.
☐	Check attic insulation depth and ventilation	DIY (look) Specialist (add insulation)	Thin or compressed insulation raises bills. Make sure vents are not blocked.
☐	Set ceiling fans to counterclockwise (air pushed down)	DIY	Fans cool people, not rooms. Turn them off when the room is empty.
☐	Close blinds and curtains on west and south windows during peak sun; consider reflective film	DIY	Cuts heat gain without touching the thermostat.
☐	Clean refrigerator coils (behind or under)	DIY	Improves efficiency and reduces strain in summer heat.
☐	Water the soil near the foundation during drought (soaker hose, within local watering rules)	DIY	Clay soils shrink in dry weather and can crack slabs. Follow city watering limits.
☐	Test the whole-house fan or attic fan if you have one	DIY	A backup way to move air. It only helps when outdoor air is cooler than indoor air. Make sure louvers and intakes are not blocked.
☐	Check window or portable AC units and clean their filters	DIY	Handy backup cooling for one room if the main system fails.

Heat and power outage plan

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Charge power banks, phones and lanterns; know where the flashlights are	DIY	Do this before storm season, not during the outage.
☐	Know how long food keeps: refrigerator about 4 hours closed; full freezer about 48 hours; half-full freezer about 24 hours	DIY	Keep doors closed. Freeze water bottles ahead of time to keep the freezer cold.
☐	Keep the car at least half full of gas	DIY	Pumps need power too.

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☐	Plan a cool place: fans, a battery fan, a friend's home or a public cooling center	**DIY**	Check on older neighbors, young children and pets. Heat illness is a real danger.
☐	Sign up for your electric utility's outage alerts and grid emergency notices	**DIY**	Know which room is the coolest and which circuits matter most (refrigerator, medical equipment).
☐	If you use a generator, plan to run it outdoors only, at least 20 feet from the house, with a battery CO alarm indoors	**DIY Specialist (electrician)**	A generator that backfeeds into the panel, or a house wired for one, needs a licensed electrician.
☐	Test smoke and CO alarms	**DIY**	Fire risk rises with heavy use of fans and portable AC units.

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Winter Ready

Freeze, heating, outages · November–February

Texas homes are built for heat, so a hard freeze is when pipes burst and outages last days. Finish the first two tables before the first forecast freeze.

Before the freeze

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Find the main water shut-off, tag it, and make sure everyone in the home can turn it off	DIY	A burst pipe is a shut-off emergency. Practice once.
☐	Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses; cover outdoor faucets with insulated covers	DIY	The most common burst-pipe call and the cheapest to prevent.
☐	Insulate exposed pipes in the garage, attic, crawlspace and along exterior walls with foam sleeves	DIY (foam on reachable pipes) Handyman (hard-to-reach)	Pipes behind finished walls need a handyman or plumber visit.
☐	Insulate or cover the irrigation backflow device and any outdoor pipes	DIY Handyman	Exposed outdoor plumbing freezes first.
☐	Check weatherstripping and door sweeps; replace if brittle or you can see daylight	DIY Handyman	Saves energy and keeps pipes and rooms warmer.
☐	Test the heat early and replace the filter	DIY (filter) Specialist (HVAC tune-up)	A dirty or poorly adjusted furnace can produce carbon monoxide. If the heat does not work, call an HVAC technician.
☐	Reverse ceiling fans to clockwise on low	DIY	Pushes warm air back down.
☐	Clean the fireplace and have the chimney and flue swept if you burn wood	DIY (ash cleanup) Specialist (chimney sweep)	Creosote causes chimney fires. Annual sweep if you burn wood.
☐	Install battery-powered CO alarms on every level and near bedrooms; test smoke alarms	DIY	CO has no smell. Alarms are the only warning.
☐	Stock blankets, non-perishable food, water, batteries and power banks	DIY	Ice storm outages can last days. See the Emergency list.

During a freeze

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Keep the thermostat at 55°F or higher, even if you are away	DIY	Do not turn heat off to save money during a freeze.
☐	Open cabinet doors under sinks on exterior walls	DIY	Lets warm room air reach pipes.
☐	Let faucets drip on the coldest nights	DIY	Moving water resists freezing and relieves pressure.
☐	Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or propane heater indoors or in the garage	DIY	Carbon monoxide kills silently. Generators run outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house.
☐	Use flashlights and battery lanterns, not candles	DIY	Candles are a leading cause of outage fires.
☐	Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed	DIY	Refrigerator about 4 hours; full freezer about 48 hours.
☐	Leave one light on and unplug large appliances	DIY	Prevents a surge when power returns and shows you power is back.

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If a pipe freezes or bursts

1. Shut off the main water valve right away.
2. Open faucets to relieve pressure. Turn off the water heater if the tank is empty.
3. Photograph the damage and turn off power to wet areas if you can reach the breaker safely. Do not stand in water near electrical.
4. Call a plumber. Dry out within 24–48 hours to avoid mold. Call your insurer and keep receipts.

If pipes are frozen but not burst, thaw slowly with warm air (a hair dryer). Never use an open flame.

For questions about your insurance policy or a claim, contact your carrier or a licensed professional. This guide helps you document your own property; it does not advise on claims.

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Emergency Ready

Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, long outages · All year

Start with a kit for at least 72 hours and a household plan. Longer outages or evacuations may require more supplies and support. Review both every quarter. Atlantic hurricane season, including the Rio Grande Valley, runs June 1?November 30.

72-hour kit (store in a bin you can carry)

	Category	Items	Notes
☐	**Water**	1 gallon per person per day for at least 3 days, plus extra for heat and pets	Rotate every 6–12 months.
☐	**Food**	3-day supply of non-perishable food, manual can opener, pet food	Check dates yearly.
☐	**Light and radio**	Flashlights, extra batteries, hand-crank or battery radio, NOAA Weather Radio	No candles.
☐	**Power**	Charged power banks, phone charging cables, car charger	Keep one bank for medical devices.
☐	**First aid and health**	First aid kit, prescriptions (7-day supply), glasses, hygiene items, dust masks	Rotate medicines before they expire.
☐	**Tools**	Pliers or wrench for utility shut-offs, whistle, plastic sheeting, duct tape, trash bags	Gas smell or hissing: leave; call the utility from outside.
☐	**Documents and cash**	Copies of insurance policies, IDs, deeds or lease, bank records, small bills	Waterproof bag or secure cloud folder; card readers fail without power.
☐	**Warmth and heat relief**	Blankets, change of clothes, sturdy shoes, battery fan, cooling towels	Texas kits need both warm and cool items.

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Household plan

	Task	Level	What to look for / when to escalate
☐	Label the main water shut-off, electrical panel and gas shut-off; write the locations on the checklist	DIY	Gas smell or hissing: leave. Call the utility or 911 from outside. Do not touch valves or switches.
☐	Choose two meeting places, one near home and one outside the neighborhood, and an out-of-area contact	DIY	Everyone should know both.
☐	Practice a home escape plan from each bedroom twice a year	DIY	Teach children how to open windows.
☐	Know your flood zone and evacuation route (Austin creeks, Rio Grande Valley hurricane zones)	DIY	Plan a route that avoids low-water crossings. Never drive through flooded roads.
☐	Sign up for local alerts (county emergency alerts, NOAA, utility outage text alerts)	DIY	Flash floods, severe weather and boil-water notices.
☐	Pick a safe spot for tornado warnings: an interior room on the lowest floor, away from windows	DIY	Keep sturdy shoes and a flashlight there.
☐	Review insurance: wind, hail, flood, contents; note deductibles	DIY	Flood is a separate policy, usually with a 30-day waiting period.
☐	Take dated photos or video of every room, the roof and the exterior once a year	DIY	Gives you a record of what you own. Store a copy off site.
☐	For hurricanes: secure patio furniture, trim trees, fill vehicle fuel, know your evacuation zone	DIY	Do it at the start of the season, not when the storm is named.
☐	Post emergency numbers: utilities, insurer, plumber, electrician, Royal RC	DIY	Put them on the fridge or inside the panel door.

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After the emergency

1. Stay out of floodwater and away from downed lines. Treat every wire as live.
2. Photograph all damage before cleanup, with dates. Keep receipts.
3. Call your insurer. Do not sign contracts under pressure. Get written estimates.
4. If water has reached outlets or the panel, do not enter or touch switches; call the utility and an electrician. Do not turn power back on until it has been checked.
5. Dry out within 24–48 hours to stop mold. Throw out food that was above 40°F for 2 hours or more.
6. Only run a generator outdoors, 20 feet from the house.

For questions about your insurance policy or a claim, contact your carrier or a licensed professional. This guide helps you document your own property; it does not advise on claims.

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When to call a pro

Situation	What to do now	Who
Gas smell or hissing	Leave the home, do not touch switches, call the gas utility from outside	**Emergency**
Burning smell, hot or buzzing outlet, scorch marks	Stop using it, switch off the breaker if safe, call a licensed electrician	**Specialist (electrician)**
GFCI will not reset, dead outlet or switch, flickering fixture	Do not use it; photograph it and have a qualified electrician look at it	**Specialist (electrician)**
Breaker trips repeatedly	Unplug devices on that circuit; do not keep resetting	**Specialist (electrician)**
Active drip from a ceiling or wall	Shut off water at the main, photograph, place a bucket	**Handyman Specialist (plumber)**
Sump pump hums but does not move water	Check the discharge line; call for service	**Specialist (plumber)**
Missing shingles, roof leak or hail damage	Photograph from the ground; tarp only if safe; call for a roof estimate	**Specialist (roofer)**
Foundation crack wider than a hairline, or horizontal	Photograph with a ruler, mark the date	**Specialist (foundation)**
AC iced up, not cooling after 15 minutes	Turn it off, thaw it, call an HVAC technician	**Specialist (HVAC)**
Burst or frozen pipe	Shut off the main, open faucets, photograph, call a plumber	**Specialist (plumber)**
Generator will not start or backfeeds into the panel	Stop; never connect to the panel yourself	**Specialist (electrician)**

Quick reference (write it in)

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Water shut-off: _____
Gas shut-off: _____
Electrical panel: _____
HVAC filter size: _____
Local utility numbers: _____
Insurance agent: _____
Kit last updated: _____

Request help from Royal RC

Royal RC handles handyman-level repairs and roofing. If something on your list needs a licensed specialist outside our scope, we will tell you so. Tell us what you found on the checklist and we will follow up.

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