



Preventing Water Damage From Everyday Appliances

Water damage is responsible for more homeowner's claims than fire, storms and theft. The main culprits lurk behind appliances, under sinks, and inside walls. Leaking pipes, dishwasher and washing machine hoses, and water heaters are the more mundane—but more common—water damage risks. If you want to stay dry, follow these steps:

Washing machine, dishwasher hoses

- Replace the hoses every three years. If you can't remember how old they are, replace them immediately. Durable, high-pressure, metal-mesh hoses will work wonders and cost less than \$20.
- Inspect the hoses every change of season. Make sure enough room exists to prevent kinks, which will weaken hoses.
- Use a good light to search the hoses for cracks, tiny blisters, or bulges. Feel for signs of wetness. Make sure the hose connections are secure. If there is any sign of weakness or wetness, replace the hose immediately. If not, make a note of the inspection date and post it near the hose.
- Shut off the water valves to the hoses if you're going away for the weekend or longer.

Automatic ice-maker line

Refrigerators with automatic ice-makers draw water through a tiny hose or flexible copper pipe.

- Inspect the hose or pipe periodically.
- When you pull the refrigerator out from the wall, be careful not to overextend the hose or pipe. Watch out for kinks. And, make sure the hose doesn't kink when you push the refrigerator back in.
- Have a licensed plumber replace the hose if you see signs of age or leaking.

Hot water tanks

Hot water tanks will leak, even if they have liners. Water sediment falls to the bottom, rusts, and ruptures the tank.

- Look around your water heater for signs of leaks. Hire a professional to inspect heaters more than five years old. If your water heater is older than a decade, consider getting a new one.
- If your heater is not on the lowest level of your home and near a floor drain, make sure it is placed inside a drain pan with a pipe to the floor drain.

Sinks, showers and bathtubs

- Shine a flashlight on the pipes under your kitchen and bathroom sinks every few months. Call a licensed plumber if you notice any sign of leaks or rust.
- Place a plastic basin underneath the drain pipes in case a slow leak develops.
- Watch for discoloration, swelling or soft areas around floors and walls near showers or bathtubs.
- Inspect caulking and tile grout at joints for cracks or mold. If you see either, have the area repaired.

Water shutoff valves

- Teach everyone in your household how to close the shutoff valves for the main water supply, sinks, toilets, and water-drawing appliances.
- If you're going away for a week or more, shutting off your main water supply can prevent a huge amount of damage.
- Consider having an automatic leak detection and water shutoff system installed, which can significantly reduce damage and, in most states, also earn premium discounts. One such system is made by Sentinel HydroSolutions and called Leak Defense System.