

Beware the domino effect of not maintaining your home – AA Insurance

Auckland, 8 June, 2016 – AA Insurance is warning Kiwi home owners against the domino effects of a poorly maintained home, where the consequences can get expensive.

“The domino effect happens when a homeowner doesn’t fix often minor damage to their home, which then leads to further damage and a growing cost to remedy it,” says Amelia Macandrew, Customer Relations Manager at AA Insurance. “For example, one rotten post can jeopardise the integrity of a fence. So, if you don’t fix the initial problem by replacing the post, you could find yourself spending a great deal more when the entire fence falls down.

“According to the recent AA Insurance Home Survey, one third of Kiwis are unaware of their maintenance obligations, and how this may affect the full coverage of a claim,” says Amelia. “That’s a worryingly high number, particularly as winter weather often reveals problems with poor maintenance, and can exacerbate the issues.”

Unfortunately, one AA Insurance customer left the damage to their porch roof too late. The tin roof had rusted and over time had let moisture into the walls and ceiling of the home. During a recent storm, wind had caused more damage to the roof, allowing rainwater to enter the enclosed porch and caused it to leak. If the issue had been fixed when it first happened, the subsequent claim would have only cost \$800 for a water stain, or up to \$1,800 if the sheets of hardboard needed replacing, all of which would have been covered by insurance. Instead, the lack of maintenance, and subsequent gradual damage of the porch, meant a full strip out and rebuild was needed due to extensive mould.

“If a lack of maintenance has contributed to the damage of your property, then a claim may not be covered or only a percentage of the costs will be paid,” Amelia continues. “Maintenance issues also run the risk of delaying your claim, or leaving you out of pocket for additional repairs required. So, it literally pays to keep up with your home maintenance.”

Over the past 12 months to the end of 30 April 2016, AA Insurance paid out nearly \$6 million for home and contents claims related weather damage, like high winds and torrential rain. While almost all were accepted and fully covered, a small percentage was related to maintenance issues rather than a sudden event.

Amelia says that both homeowners and rental property owners are obliged to ensure their property is adequately looked after in order to meet the conditions of their insurance policy as well as keep those living there safe and warm, especially over winter.

“It’s human nature to leave chores like home maintenance until a rainy day, however a rainy day is the time you’re most grateful for having already looked after your home. The pay-off far outweighs the work involved, especially if you need to make a claim. And at this time of year it pays to get those maintenance issues sorted before any bad weather causes havoc.

“Not only will it help provide a safer home for you, your family, and tenants, it will also protect your investment and keep your insurance cover in place,” she says.

Maintenance tips to help keep your property in good working order:

- Ensure the roof is checked for any rust, cracks, leaks or other damage.
- Clear gutters regularly to prevent water backup. Are the gutters and drainpipes attached properly, and is water draining away from the house or garage?
- Check walls and timber throughout the home (and garage) for decay, dry rot, or water damage etc.
- Don’t let gardens build up too close against external walls of the house, and keep an eye on mature trees growing next to fences, foundations and power lines.
- Maintain your fences and retaining walls, especially if they are starting to shift or fall, and look out for any cracks or movement from walkways and steps etc.
- Check for movement between the shower wall and floor that may indicate a leak, and check an inexplicably high water bill in case of a leak or damage to water pipes.
- Are all power points, light switches and smoke detectors working properly?
- Look up. Is there any water damage, mould, or blistering paint on your ceiling that could indicate a leaky roof?
- Remember to check your garage and other outbuildings. If a structure is rotten, rusty, leaking or generally in need of repair, then get on to it!
- Consider getting your chimney checked and cleaned as a poorly maintained chimney can cause a fire.

*The 2016 AA Insurance Home Survey interviewed 1,000 Kiwi homeowners online about home insurance.

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About AA Insurance

AA Insurance has demonstrated trusted expertise in home, contents, and car insurance in New Zealand since launching in 1994. We're a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp Group, and we employ over 650 staff to look after more than 345,000 customers and 650,000 policies.

We proudly support youth charity Blue Light, and the NRL Telstra Premiership and Holden Cup referees in New Zealand, and have been consistently recognised by: Reader's Digest Most Trusted Brands (since 2011), NZ Direct Insurer Award (since 2012), IBM Kenexa Best Workplaces Survey (since 2008), Canstar Blue Most Satisfied Customers (since 2011), and the Colmar Brunton Corporate Reputation Index (since 2015) that recognises New Zealand's most successful companies.

AA Insurance has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

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