

A FREE GUIDE FOR
Rental Property Owners & Real Estate Investors

Learn how to identify maintenance issues before they become costly repairs.



**10 SMALL PROBLEMS
THAT COME BECOME
VERY EXPENSIVE
REPAIRS**

10 Small Problems That Can Become Expensive Rental Property Repairs

What Every Rental Property Owner Should Inspect Before It's Too Late

One of the biggest misconceptions among new real estate investors is that major property damage happens suddenly.

In reality, most expensive repairs start as small, inexpensive issues that go unnoticed for months—or even years.

During our recent Raíces Financieras workshop, Property Manager Evelyn Luna shared practical strategies for identifying these problems early through regular inspections and preventative maintenance.

Here are 10 common examples.

1. A Disconnected Downspout

Small Problem:

A downspout becomes disconnected after landscaping work, heavy snow, or routine wear.

What Happens Next:

Water no longer flows away from the home and instead pools near the foundation.

Over time this can lead to:

- Water intrusion into basements or crawl spaces
- Foundation damage
- Mold growth
- Soil erosion
- Costly structural repairs

Prevention:

Inspect gutters and downspouts several times per year, especially after winter and landscaping services.

2. Cracked Shower Caulking

Small Problem:

The caulking around a tub or shower begins to crack or separate.

What Happens Next:

Water slowly penetrates behind walls where damage cannot be seen.

Over time this can cause:

- Mold growth
- Rotting wood framing
- Drywall damage
- Costly bathroom renovations

Prevention:

Inspect bathrooms during routine property visits and replace deteriorated caulking immediately.

3. Missing Smoke Detector Batteries

Small Problem:

A tenant removes the battery because the detector is chirping or sounding during cooking.

What Happens Next:

The property loses a critical life-safety device.

Potential consequences include:

- Increased fire risk
- Insurance complications
- Liability exposure
- Serious injury or death

Prevention:

Verify smoke and carbon monoxide detectors during every inspection.

4. Dirty HVAC Filters

Small Problem:

The furnace filter is never replaced.

What Happens Next:

Airflow becomes restricted, forcing the system to work harder.

Possible outcomes include:

- Higher utility costs
- Reduced equipment lifespan
- Expensive HVAC repairs
- Premature furnace replacement

Prevention:

Create a filter replacement schedule and document each service.

5. Slow Plumbing Leaks

Small Problem:

A minor drip develops under a sink.

What Happens Next:

Moisture accumulates inside cabinets and walls.

Potential consequences:

- Mold
- Cabinet damage
- Flooring damage
- Pest attraction

Prevention:

Inspect all plumbing connections during routine visits.

6. Exterior Light Fixtures Damaged by Snow and Ice

Small Problem:

Winter weather loosens fixtures or exposes wiring.

What Happens Next:

Water enters the electrical system.

Potential consequences:

- Electrical failures
- Short circuits
- Fire hazards
- Expensive electrical repairs

Prevention:

Inspect exterior fixtures every spring.

7. Dryer Vents Filled With Lint

Small Problem:

Lint builds up over time.

What Happens Next:

Restricted airflow causes overheating.

Potential consequences:

- Increased energy use
- Appliance damage
- House fires

Prevention:

Inspect and clean dryer vents regularly.

8. Early Signs of Pest Activity

Small Problem:

A few droppings or signs of insects appear.

What Happens Next:

The problem spreads throughout the property.

Potential consequences:

- Expensive extermination costs
- Tenant complaints
- Damage to insulation and wiring
- Vacancy losses

Prevention:

Address pest issues immediately instead of waiting.

9. Damaged Window and Door Seals

Small Problem:

Weather stripping begins to fail.

What Happens Next:

Air and moisture enter the property.

Potential consequences:

- Higher heating bills
- Water intrusion
- Mold
- Premature deterioration of building materials

Prevention:

Inspect seals before winter each year.

10. Skipping Move-In and Move-Out Documentation

Small Problem:

No photos, videos, or written condition reports are completed.

What Happens Next:

Disputes arise when tenants move out.

Potential consequences:

- Lost security deposit claims
- Difficulty proving damages
- Legal disputes
- Unnecessary repair expenses

Prevention:

Document everything with photos, videos, written inspection reports, and signatures.

The Bottom Line

Most costly rental property repairs begin as small maintenance issues.

Successful investors don't simply react to problems. They create systems to identify them early.

A 15-minute inspection today can prevent a \$15,000 repair tomorrow.

Rental property wealth isn't built only by acquiring properties.

It's protected through documentation, preventative maintenance, and consistent management.