

Winterization

The weather is getting colder. Here are tips to help you get your home ready for winter:

- **Furnace Inspection and Maintenance**

- Call a HVAC professional to inspect and clean your furnace. Systems that aren't properly maintained may be less than 50 percent efficient.
- Change furnace filters monthly. Statistics show that most home heating systems are only about 60 percent efficient.
- Remove all flammables in the proximity of the furnace.

- **Plumbing Preparation**

- Insulate pipes in unheated areas.
- Open cupboard doors in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- Drain all hoses.
- Locate your main water valve in the event you need to shut it off.
- Leave the heat on to at least 55 degrees if you are gone for an extended period of time.

- **Inspect Exterior Doors and Windows**

- Install weather-stripping around doors to prevent leakage.
- Replace cracked or damaged windows.
- Fill exterior cracks with caulk to create an air tight seal.
- Consider installing plastic shields over basement windows and doors.
- Replace summer screens with storm windows.

- **Inspect Roof, Gutters and Downspouts**

- Check the roof for missing or damaged shingles and have them replaced.
- Check flashing around chimneys and other roof projections which are often the source of leaks.
- Make sure gutters and downspouts are clean. Wet leaves remaining in the gutters over winter add significant weight and volume to the gutter when frozen and increase the risk of damage.

- **Prepare Landscape**

- Have trees trimmed around electrical wires.
- Seal driveways, brick patios and wood decks.

- **Service Weather-Specific Equipment**

- Drain gas from lawnmowers.
- Replace worn snow shovels and buy bags of ice-melt/sand.
- Service or tune-up snow blowers.

- **Get Wood Burning Stove or Fireplace Ready**

- Have a chimney sweep remove soot and creosote.
- Check that the chimney is clear of nests from birds, squirrels or other animals.
- Check flue damper operation. Make sure it opens and closes fully, and that it is able to be locked in the open or closed position.
- Inspect the fire brick in the fireplace. If you see any open mortar joints have them **repaired immediately!** A fire can spread into the stud wall behind the masonry fire brick through open mortar joints.



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- **Install Smoke and CO Detectors**

- Be sure the batteries for smoke detectors are fresh.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector near your furnace and/or other home utilities that operate on a combustion fuel source.
- Test all smoke and CO detectors to make sure they are in working order.
- Purchase and/or check all fire extinguishers.

- **Prepare an Emergency Kit**

- Store bottled water and non-perishable food supplies, blankets and a first-aid kit in a dry and easy to access location.
- Buy a battery back-up to protect your computer and electronic equipment.
- Develop an emergency contacts sheet and post with all phones.
- Keep flashlights and other crank or battery-powered lighting handy in the event of a power shortage. If candles are used for emergency lighting, extreme caution must be employed to minimize risk of fire.

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Checklist

- Check the attic, walls and basement for adequate insulation.
- Feel around electrical outlets and switch-plates for cold air, add insulation where necessary.
- Look around doors and windows for gaps and potential places where warm air can escape.
- Caulk or apply weather-stripping around problem draft areas.
- Consider replacing windows with energy efficient double-paned windows.
- Clean gutters and downspouts in mid-fall and double-check them before winter.
- Have a contractor look for damaged roof shingles and loose gutters.
- Replace the filter in your furnace.
- Have a heating/cooling expert look at your furnace if you are unsure of its efficiency.
- Have chimneys and woodstoves cleaned early in the season.
- Test the flue for each fireplace for a tight seal when closed.
- Close any vents in your home that may have been opened for the warm weather.
- Disconnect hoses from outside faucets and turn off the water.
- Consider installing an overhang above the entrance to your home to make steps safer.
- Buy a snow shovel and other winter supplies before the messy weather hits.
- Keep extra water and canned food in storage just in case.