



10 Tips for Winterizing Your Home

With winter just around the corner, now is the time to start preparing your home for the colder months. While it may seem tedious, neglecting to invest a little time and money into your home every fall could mean dealing with thousands of dollars in damage and all the stress that comes along with it – which is the last thing anyone needs during the holiday season! Be proactive now, and it will be well worth the peace of mind as you cozy up over the winter – ready for whatever it has in store for you.

1. **Have Your Furnace Serviced**

Scheduling an annual service to have your furnace checked and tuned up is a great way to avoid unexpected and costly problems with your heating system. Signing a maintenance contract for this will often get you a discount and can sometimes affect the warranty. Additionally, make sure to keep filters on hand and change them every 3 months.



2. **Consider Installing a Programmable Thermostat**

With dropping temperatures and sky-rocketing heating bills on the horizon, now is the perfect time to upgrade to a programmable thermostat. While this is by no means a “must-do”, programmable thermostats are a smart and relatively inexpensive investment. They give you the ability to set and adjust the temperature of your home based on your lifestyle and preferences, saving owners an average of 10-15% on heating and cooling bills. In addition to being energy and cost-efficient, certain models may qualify for rebates from your local utility providers – so be sure to check this out before purchasing!

3. **Check Your Insulation**

There are several ways to ensure your home is as well-insulated from the cold as possible, including:

1. Applying caulking/weather-stripping to seal any air leaks around window and door frames, cracks between trim and siding, and areas pipes and wires enter your home.
2. Having insulation in colder areas, such as attics and basements, evaluated to make sure it is sufficient, and installing additional insulation if necessary.
3. Hanging additional window coverings to prevent heat from escaping.

4. **Protect Your Pipes**

Check and make sure any pipes located in colder spaces are properly insulated to prevent freezing/bursting and have insulation added if they are not. On especially colder days (or if you go on vacation), it is also a good idea to leave your faucets dripping ever so slightly and to open cabinets under sinks to allow heat to better circulate to those areas. Lastly, even if you are away, don't turn your heat down too low (55-60 degrees minimum) as that also places your pipes at risk.



5. **Clean Gutters/Inspect Roof**

Remove leaves, twigs and other debris from your gutters as these can cause blockages and ice dams which can mean major water damage to your home. If it is safe to do so, give your roof a once-over for



any red flags (missing/cracked shingles, rusted flashing, etc.), or simply pay to have a roofing contractor come out once a year for an annual inspection and cleaning.

6. Protect Your Foundation

Check your rain gutter downspouts to ensure they are extending at least 5 feet from your home and if they don't, purchase downspout extensions which are inexpensive and easy to install. Additionally, check the soil around your house to ensure it slopes away from your foundation at least 6 inches over 10 feet. This will help prevent water from soaking into the soil around your foundation which can cause leaks and cracks.



7. Prune Your Trees

A good rule of thumb is to keep branches and limbs at least 3 feet from your house to avoid any moisture from dripping on to your roofing or siding, as well as any potential damage from storms or high winds.

8. Have Your Chimney Cleaned and Inspected

If you have a fireplace that you use, you should be having the chimney cleaned and inspected annually to ensure it is safe for operation and that dampers and flues are working properly.



9. Drain Sprinkler Systems

If you have an irrigation system, now is the time to decommission it for the season to avoid discovering any broken pipes or sprinkler heads come spring. If there is a main valve, shut off the water, turn off the controller, and open the drain valves to release the water. Also remove sprinkler heads to shake out any trapped water. If you do not have a main valve, contact a landscaping company to clear the lines and winterize the system.

10. Get Your Tools Ready

A few tools/supplies to keep on hand during the winter season include:

1. Salt and snow-blower or shovel (to keep walkways and driveways safe and slip-proof).
2. Emergency kits (in case of a power outage). These should include batteries, flashlights/lanterns, extra food and water, emergency blankets, duct tape, and a fully charged portable cell phone charger.
3. Roof rake (in case of a blizzard, these can be very helpful with removing excessive amounts of snow to prevent possible roof damage or collapses).

