

Winter Home Preparation Guide



Winter is around the corner, and taking a few proactive steps can help ensure that your home stays warm, safe, and energy-efficient during the colder months. This guide walks you through key maintenance tasks that can protect your property, prevent costly repairs, and keep your home cozy all season long.

By completing these winter preparation tasks, you can protect your home from winter weather damage, keep it running efficiently, and ensure a warm, safe environment for your family. Taking these simple steps can save money, prevent headaches, and help you enjoy a comfortable winter season.

Protect Pipes from Freezing

- **Insulate Pipes:** Wrap pipes in unheated areas (e.g., basement, garage, attic) with insulation foam or heat tape to prevent freezing.
- **Shut Off Exterior Water Valves:** Turn off and drain outdoor faucets and irrigation systems to prevent ice build-up and pipe damage.
- **Let Faucets Drip on Very Cold Nights:** Keep water moving through pipes by allowing a slow drip, which can help prevent freezing.

Seal Windows and Doors

- **Check for Drafts:** Inspect windows and doors for any gaps. Use weather stripping around doors and caulk around windows to keep warm air in and cold air out.
- **Install Storm Windows or Window Insulation Film:** These provide an extra layer of insulation that can keep your home warmer and reduce heating costs.
- **Replace Old or Worn-Out Weather Stripping:** Seals around doors and windows wear down over time. Replace any damaged strips to ensure a good seal.

Clean and Inspect Your Gutters

- **Clear Debris from Gutters:** Remove leaves, dirt, and other debris that can clog gutters and lead to water damage or ice dams.
- **Check Downspouts:** Ensure downspouts direct water away from your foundation to prevent leaks or flooding.
- **Consider Gutter Guards:** Installing gutter guards can prevent buildup and make seasonal cleaning easier.

Service Your Heating System

- **Schedule a Furnace Tune-Up:** A professional inspection and cleaning of your furnace can ensure it runs efficiently and safely all winter.
- **Replace Furnace Filters:** Dirty filters reduce heating efficiency and can circulate dust and allergens. Change filters every 1-3 months.
- **Test Your Thermostat:** Make sure your thermostat is working properly and consider installing a programmable one for more efficient heating control.

Winter Home Preparation Guide (continued)



Check Your Roof and Chimney

- **Inspect for Roof Damage:** Look for loose or damaged shingles that could allow water or cold air in. If you see issues, have them repaired before heavy snow arrives.
- **Clean the Chimney:** If you have a wood-burning fireplace, have your chimney cleaned and inspected for blockages and buildup.
- **Consider a Chimney Cap:** A cap prevents animals from nesting and keeps rain and snow from entering your chimney.

Prevent Ice Dams

- **Improve Attic Insulation:** Proper insulation in your attic keeps warm air from rising and melting snow on the roof, which can refreeze and form ice dams.
- **Ventilate the Attic:** Good attic ventilation prevents warm air from building up, which helps maintain a stable roof temperature and prevents ice dams.
- **Use a Roof Rake for Snow Removal:** A roof rake helps you safely remove heavy snow from the roof's edge, reducing the likelihood of ice dams.

Prepare for Snow and Ice

- **Stock Up on Ice Melt or Sand:** Use pet- and plant-safe ice melt to keep walkways and driveways clear.
- **Check Your Snow Shovels or Snow Blower:** Make sure you have the right tools on hand, and that they're in good working condition before the first snowfall.
- **Trim Tree Branches Near the House:** Snow-laden branches can snap and damage your roof or power lines, so trim any that hang close to your home.

Check Your Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- **Replace Batteries:** Winter is the peak season for indoor heating, which increases the risk of fire or carbon monoxide buildup. Check and replace the batteries in all detectors.
- **Install Additional Detectors if Needed:** Place smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor of your home, especially near bedrooms and utility areas.

Reverse Ceiling Fans

- **Set Fans to Rotate Clockwise:** Running ceiling fans clockwise on a low setting pushes warm air that rises back down, helping rooms feel warmer without increasing heating costs.

Prepare an Emergency Kit

- **Assemble Cold-Weather Essentials:** Have items like blankets, candles, flashlights, batteries, and non-perishable food in case of power outages.
- **Keep an Emergency Contact List:** Have contact information for emergency services, a trusted HVAC technician, and utility companies handy.