



Fall-Winter Home Checklist: Inside and Outside

Energy Efficiency and Regular preventative maintenance

Inside

- Reverse ceiling fans so they are going clockwise.
- Weatherproof doors and windows with weather-stripping, caulk, or plastic that can be adhered to windows if needed.
- Insulate pipes near windows, doors, and unheated or poorly heated rooms. You can also install thermostat-controlled, UL-listed heat cables. Use cables that are appropriate for your pipe and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation.
- Make sure you have adequate insulation in attics, crawl spaces, and walls. If you don't your heating system will work overtime as heat will escape the home. For homes in particularly harsh climates you can install heat tape between the walls and the house.
- Install foam-insulating sheets behind outlets and switch plates on exterior walls to reduce outside airflow.
- Check for high water pressure with a simple pressure gauge. High water pressure can damage pipes and cause the joints of plumbing to leak. This can lead to serious pipe freezes and plumbing disaster. If you have high water pressure have your pressure reducing valve replaced or have one installed by a plumber.
- After checking for leaks, flush and insulate your hot water tank. Flushing the hot water heater removes sediment that has collected at the bottom. If your water tank is very old, you can wrap an insulation blanket around it to prevent heat loss and save money on energy costs. This works well if the water heater is located in a cold room or closet.
- Disconnect your outside air conditioning unit from power to prevent it from powering up during the winter months and getting damaged.

Inside continued

- Clean heating vents. Dust and vacuum if necessary.
- Change the batteries in your thermostat and if it needs to be replaced now is the time to get that done.
- Make sure you have plenty of air filters for your heating system. Typically, you need to change your filter every month.

Outside

- Move your outside furniture and appliances (grills, lawn mowers, kid's toys) inside to a shed or garage.
- Weatherize your lawn mowers. Clean dirt, grass, leaves, and mud from the lawn mower and drain the oil and gasoline.
- Clean your grill. Let it run on high heat to burn off leftover food, Clean grill grates with a wire brush, empty the grease tray, wipe off grease and other debris on the exterior, and store the grill in a dry area or protect using a grill cover.
- Store seasonal tools like rakes, brooms, shovels, and gardening equipment in a dry place like a shed or garage. You can coat them with a thin layer of vegetable spray to prevent rust.
- Close off water source to hose bibs and drain hose bibs by opening the faucet all the way. Also drain your hoses.
- Clean out gutters. Frozen leaves are heavy. You also want to make sure that rain will drain away from the house to protect the foundation.
- Check your outside decks for splintering or decay. Treat if necessary so the problem does not become worse over the winter.
- Check outside stairs and handrails to make sure they are sturdy.
- Check your roof. If you have a pitched roof check for broken or missing shingles and follow through with proper repairs.
- Protect the top of your air conditioner unit from falling debris. A simple piece of plywood secured by bricks will do the trick. Fall is a great time to make sure there is no debris collecting around your unit. You can cover the air conditioner with a protective cover but depending on your climate this can cause harm with mold growth. Consult your heating and cooling specialist.



Safety and Preparedness

Inside

- Check your dryer hose and exhaust and clean if necessary.
- Get an annual fireplace and chimney inspection if you use it during the winter. If you do not use your fireplace, make sure to insulate it—this is as easy as stuffing some fiberglass insulation up the chimney.
- Have your heating and cooling system cleaned and tuned up every year seasonally (spring and fall).
- Check batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Check portable heaters and their cords for damage or cracks. Use with caution as they are a common source of house fires.
- Prepare for winter storms. You should have on hand bottled water, non-perishable food, flashlights, first aid supplies, batteries and a smart phone charger.
- If you live in an area that gets power outages during storms, early fall is the time to buy a generator before they sell out.
- Label water shut off valves under sinks and for appliances. Know where your main water valve is so you can shut off water to the whole house quickly. If a frozen pipe bursts, being able to turn off the water quickly can save you thousands of dollars in damage.

Outside

- Check for dead tree limbs and have them removed to prevent them from falling and causing damage during a storm.
- Make sure outdoor lighting is working. Lighting is very important when sidewalks, stairs, and driveways are icy.
- If you enjoy hanging up lights outside, make sure your outdoor outlets are ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets. These outlets prevent fires. In addition, you will also want to make sure the lights you are using are designed for outside use and are UL-certified. It is unsafe to plug outdoor lights into an indoor outlet. Consult an electrician.
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Outside continued

- Check exhaust vents. Some furnaces and boilers, as well as gas water heaters, vent through a chimney, while newer high-efficiency models may vent through plastic pipes running through a side wall. Make sure these vents are open and free of obstructions. A vent that hasn't been used all summer may have become home to animals. Their nests can block the vent pipes.
- Check for critters. Check for holes around the foundation, in siding, the fascia and soffit. Make sure your gable vents are still intact and consider putting some wire mesh behind them to prevent birds and other critters from getting inside. If you still are seeing evidence of critters—set traps. Animals can cause significant damage to your home and health.



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Bringing Comfort to Your Home!

