

7 STEPS TO GET YOUR HOME WINTER READY

Cold weather is almost here, and along with the holiday cheer comes drafts, leaks and other not-so-fun issues that can wreak havoc for homeowners.

Follow our handy winterization checklist to make sure your home is ready for the cold snap.

1. Insulate windows.

If you don't have double-paned windows, now is the perfect time to consider them! It's a home upgrade that will quickly pay for itself.

If you're not ready for all-new windows, ensure the edges of your existing ones are sealed. If there are gaps between the window and the frame, a new sealant may be in order.

2. Seal doors.

Doors are a common culprit for heat-stealing drafts. A weather strip costs less than \$20 at most home improvement stores and will keep your heating bill down, not to mention keeping your doorway free from weather damage.

Most weather strips come with an adhesive backing for easy installation that only takes a few minutes.

3. Inspect your roof and attic.

Winter is one of the most taxing times of year for your roof. Find signs of wear and tear while the damage is still reparable by conducting a roof inspection or hiring one done.

4. Insulate your attic.

It may sound counterintuitive, but you want your attic to remain cold during the winter to prevent ice melt that can lead to damaging ice dams. To keep it chilly, make sure it's properly insulated and there are no drafts sneaking in from the house.

5. Drain your sprinkler system.

Most of us pay attention to our home's pipes, but it's easy to forget the sprinkler system! Make sure it's drained before the temperatures dip to prevent damage.

6. Change furnace filters.

This oh-so-simple fix can lead to major problems if it's ignored. What's more, a clean furnace filter will ensure your unit runs efficiently, saving money on your heating bill.

It's also a great idea to have an annual furnace tune-up from a qualified professional to prolong the life of your unit and identify any problems before they become emergencies.

7. Adjust your thermostat.

No need to keep the house at a toasty 72 while you're away. For those in cold-weather climates, the Department of Energy suggests keeping the thermostat set at 68 degrees and turning it down between 5 and 10 degrees when you leave the house.

By taking a few simple steps ahead of the cold, you'll save money and lower the likelihood of emergencies that could trip up your holiday plans.