

## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR WINTER!

Hard to believe that it is time for this discussion, but once the vacation is over and school has started, the next chores on the to do list aren't far behind. The last 2 years cold, windy and icy conditions have caused many problems and numerous homeowner insurance claims. Here is a checklist to help you prepare.

Outdoor plumbing – drain your hose connections, pool & sprinklers. After you turn off the water, leave them in the “on” position.

Gutters – don't forget to clean them out once your trees are bare. Clogged gutters often cause ice dams on the roof, resulting in leaking to the inside of the home.

Install heat coil along the roof line with gutters, extending it down into the downspouts as well. Plug it into a GFI outlet (an electrician can do this) and make sure it is turned on (a timer might be a good idea).

Use crack filler for cracks in your sidewalk or driveway, especially around the foundation.

Trim trees away from the house; squirrels and raccoons can do tremendous damage once they find shelter. Also be sure chimneys are free and clear.

If you suspect your roof could be a problem, get it inspected. Many problems cannot be fixed in freezing weather – shingles are brittle, the roof may be covered with ice and snow and a danger to climb.

If your home is old, add a layer of R-30 insulation to the attic ceiling.

Test for drafts around your windows. On a windy day, a candle will flicker. Caulk around windows on the inside and outside. Use expandable foam for cracks in basement walls, available in hardware stores. Add weather stripping around drafty doors.

Routinely get your furnace tested before cold weather sets in.

Prepare a “winter” bin with flashlights, batteries, candles, lighters, a weather radio, maybe some extra blankets. If you want to go one step farther, add canned goods, manual can opener, crackers, nuts, cookies, paper plates. AND don't rob the “winter bin” early. Put all this in a closet equipped with a battery touch light.

Provide Pipe Protection on extremely cold days: Winterize those pipes first off. Open cabinet doors for pipes on outside walls to avoid freezing, let hot and cold water trickle from faucets, don't ever shut off the heat if traveling – set it to 55 degrees and have someone check frequently. Know where shut off valves are for a quick response.

Consider installing a standby generator by a professional. Lastly check batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, check fire extinguishers. Stock up on rock salt and a snow shovel. Now that we're prepared, let the snow fly!

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