

Home Maintenance Checklist for Fall and Winter

This morning, we were surprised to find seven inches of fresh snow. It is much too early for all of this, and my heart rate is still coming down from the struggle of finding hats, snowpants, and matching mittens for each of my children before sending them out the door for school. As much as I would like to deny it, winter is on its way.

Here is a checklist of fall and winter home maintenance tasks to prepare your home (and your family) for the colder temperatures ahead.

Outdoors:

Scrape peeling paint, and apply touch up paint to your siding, trim, and fences.

Check the condition of your deck and apply a waterproofing sealer if necessary.

Check weatherstripping on doors. Repair.

Check caulk on windows. Repair.

Clean and store patio furniture.

Clean and store bicycles, tricycles, and outdoor toys.

Wash all windows, inside and out.

Remove, clean, and store summertime screens.

Install storm windows and doors.

Check roof for damaged or missing shingles or problems with flashing. Repair.

Clear gutters and inspect downspouts.

Check sidewalks and driveways for cracks or other damage. Repair.

Locate your snow removal tools: snow shovel, plows, and snow blowers. Make sure they are ready to go.

Lawn and Garden:

Blow out sprinkler systems and winterize or insulate exterior faucets and water lines.

Drain and store garden hoses.

Fertilize and reseed your lawn.

Prune trees and shrubs.

Remove annuals.

Cut back perennials.

Rake leaves.

Indoors:

Schedule a cleaning and inspection of your heating system.

Inspect your fireplace and chimney. Call a professional chimney sweep if necessary.

Perform seasonal maintenance on your hot water heater.

Schedule a professional carpet cleaning.

Clean and inspect dryer hoses and exterior dryer vents.

Change furnace filter, and plan to change your filter every month during the winter. Monthly filter changes can really help reduce energy costs.

Check your air ducts. Call a duct cleaning service if it has been a few years since your ducts have been professionally cleaned. If you have been changing your furnace filter frequently and your ducts have been cleaned recently, simply take off the register covers and vacuum inside.

Switch to warmer bedding. Replace cotton sheets with flannels. Add warmer layers to beds.

Make sure your family members are outfitted with everything they need for the cold winter months: Gloves, hats, boots, snowpants, warm socks, and coats.

Check the batteries in your carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors.

Check your fire extinguishers.

Talk about family safety plans and escape routes. Review your "meeting place" in the event of a home fire to ensure that everyone knows what to do and where to go.

Inspect your attic to make sure it is getting cool, fresh air and that there is no evidence of condensation.

Check attic fans.

Prepare your home for a power outage. Check the batteries in your flashlights and make sure they are easily accessible. Also, make sure to have a supply of nonperishable foods, a manual can opener, and a traditional corded phone or cell phone available.

Automobile:

Make sure your tires are adequate for the winter weather in your area.

Check your car battery.

Check antifreeze levels.

Make sure you have extra windshield wiper fluid in your car, as well as a brush and ice scraper, blanket, jumper cables, and first aid kit. If you live in an area where you expect extreme winter conditions, you will also want to keep a tow rope, shovel, and a bag of sand or kitty litter to help your tires gain traction on icy roads.

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