



HOUSE MAINTENANCE LIST



Your house is more than just an investment: It's your home. So naturally, you'll want to take good care of it. Take the time to prepare your home prior to the oncoming cold weather. Ready everything for the cold months ahead.

- Create and follow a weatherization/risk management plan for your home or property (like the one below) to minimize storm impacts and follow each year at the beginning of storm season.
- Conduct annual reviews of your property insurance to understand and address coverage needs. Ask about flood insurance or coverage for sewer/storm drain back-up.
- Complete a detailed home inventory of your possessions and keep in a safe place away from your home (like a safe deposit box). You can find a downloadable form at TakeWinterByStorm.org.

While following a general home maintenance schedule is important year-round, there are specific maintenance efforts you should focus on to protect your home during cold winter months. These guidelines can help you weather the winter season with a well-maintained home.

Roof, Attic and Gutters

- Check your roof for loose, missing, worn, or damaged shingles and make sure flashing is secure around vents and chimneys to eliminate flying debris and reduce the chance of possible water damage.
- Inspect the insulation in your attic and crawl space. Seal areas around recessed lights, the attic hatch, and plumbing vents that may be allowing warm air from the living space below to enter the attic.
- Gutters should be clean, properly aligned, and securely attached. Inspect gutters a few times during the fall and winter months, especially if there are many trees around your house.
- Gutters and downspouts should direct water away from the foundation, as well as away from walkways and driveways, so that they do not become slippery or icy.

Outside Walls and Framing

- Check soffits, siding, brick walls, trim, and flashing for damage, looseness, warping, and decay.
- Look for termite damage and signs of other insects or rodents.
- Keep snow build-up off of surfaces that could collapse.

Foundations and Basements

- Check foundations for signs of settling, such as bulging or shifting. Have a professional inspect cracks more than 1/8-inch wide.
- Check the foundation for small cracks or openings where mice or other pests can tunnel in. Winter is when they seek the warmth indoors, so seal up any possible entrances.
- Look in your basement and crawl spaces for dampness and leakage. Standing water could be a sign of improper drainage, which can weaken the foundation.
- Test your sump pump before every wet season. Consider installing battery-operated backup sump pumps to protect against a power failure or mechanical failure of the primary pump.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Check that detectors are functioning; change batteries at least once a year.
- Replace units every eight years.



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Doors and Windows

- Check your windows for cold air coming in that may compromise your heating efficiency. If you don't have double-paned windows, remove the screens and install storm windows to ensure that the heat stays in and the cold stays out. A cost efficient alternative is placing a plastic-film sheet kit around the window to keep the heat from escaping. Be sure to check your doors as well.
- Replace caulk and weather-stripping that has lost contact with surfaces.
- Add deadbolt locks to all exterior doors, including the door between the garage and your home. Use a heavy metal strike plate with three-inch screws and Grade 1 deadbolts for the highest level of protection.

Plumbing

- Pipes located in attics, crawl spaces, basements, and near outer walls can be susceptible to freezing in extreme temperatures. Insulate exposed water pipes to protect them from freezing and bursting. Think about replacing outdoor faucets with frost-proof models.
- Check your water heater. Most water heaters last eight to 12 years. Wet spots on the floor or a rusted tank may signal a problem. Water heaters should be installed on the lowest level of the home and always be located next to a floor drain.
- Wrap outdoor pipes and faucets with insulation materials or use inexpensive dome kits.
- Look around and under appliances and fixtures for leaks or wear. Check shutoff valves at all fixtures and the main water line annually.
- Replace washing machine water hoses every three to five years.

Electrical and Mechanical Systems and Utilities

- Have professionals check your air conditioning and furnace. Consider having your air ducts cleaned and filters replaced.
- Have an electrician inspect your electrical system.
- Plug sensitive electronic equipment and appliances into UL-listed surge protector power strips.
- Clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct and damper, and the space under the dryer.
- Locate the electric, gas and water shut-off valves. Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves and teach family members how to turn off utilities. If you turn the gas off, a representative from your natural gas utility must turn it back on. Do not attempt to do this yourself.
- Clear snow off utilities meters and away from basement windows and your dryer exhaust vent.

Landscaping, Walks and Porches

- Rake leaves away from storm drains and keep them clear to avoid flooding streets and damage to personal property. Gather leaves into yard waste containers for correct recycling.
- Trees should be healthy and placed at a safe distance from the home. Trim shrubbery branches away from siding to help prevent insect and moisture damage. Icy conditions can cause branches to break and damage your home.
- Check that mulch and earth are eight inches below siding.
- Remove shrubbery that interferes with walkways.
- Watch the patterns of storm-water drainage on slopes near your home, and note the places where runoff water converges.
- Grade property so water drains away from the foundation and downspouts direct water away from the house into the storm drainage system.
- Watch the hills around your home for any signs of land movement, such as small landslides, debris flows or progressively tilting trees. Contact your local geotechnical or structural engineer to determine the severity of the problem.
- Check for loose handrails, banisters and stair coverings.
- Repair buckled or cracked walkways.
- Clear your sidewalks of snow and ice with salt, deicer and/or snow shoveling to avoid injuries on your property.