

The Ultimate Winter Home Maintenance Checklist

Furnace

- Regular annual furnace inspections and tune-ups by an HVAC professional will extend the life of your furnace and minimize the chance of an unexpected breakdown on the coldest night in winter.
- You can change the furnace filter regularly for better air quality and to avoid unnecessary shutdowns.

Windows and Doors

- Have a closer look at your windows and doors. Are there any gaps? Is the weather stripping still doing its job? You can solve most window and door draft problems by caulking the leaks and applying new weather stripping. In some cases, you may need to replace your doors and windows.
- Consider getting an energy audit to improve your home's energy efficiency, increase home comfort, save energy costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Exterior Walls

- Take a look at the condition of the caulking on the exterior walls of the house. Fill holes with foam or caulk.

Clean the Eavestroughs

- If you don't like getting up on a ladder, hire a professional service to remove the leaves from your eavestroughs and downspouts. This will prevent harmful clogging and ice buildup, which can result in damaging water surges during fluctuating temperatures.
- Tighten loose brackets and replace broken ones.
- Always make sure the water flows away from your home to protect your foundation and prevent flooding in your basement.

Inspect your Roof

- Check your roof for missing or damaged shingles, and repair them to avoid water from seeping into the attic.

Exterior Water Pipes

- Be sure to turn off your outside water tap.
- Drain outdoor water spigots.
- Turn off your hose bib shut-off valve.
- Open the taps outside to drain excess water.
- Purchase a Styrofoam cover that attaches over the outdoor spigots to keep them from freezing.

Interior Water Pipes

- Winterize water pipes, especially if they are on an exterior wall or exposed to drafts.
- Wrap pipes with insulation.
- Keep your heat set to at least 15°C or 59°F.

If you are not staying in your home:

- Turn off all valves inside your house, then open the taps outside to drain excess water. Be sure to leave outdoor valves open during the winter.
- Have a friend or house-sitter turn your water on for a few seconds every few days.

Check your Water Heater

- Do you live in an area with hard water? Then you'll know how hard it can be on your appliances. You can reduce sediment buildup, prevent cracks and leaks, and ultimately improve the efficiency of your water heater by flushing it at least once a year.

Attic Vents

- Keep attic vents clean for optimum ventilation to prevent ice dams and water damage during a thaw.

Chimneys

- Hire a professional chimney sweep to remove any blockage or buildup that could cause a fire. There are many possible causes, including the damper, damaged flue tiles, and exterior cracks on the brickwork. A chimney sweep will thoroughly clean your chimney, and remove harmful soot and creosote.

Check your Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Test your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms monthly to make sure they work.
- Replace batteries every six months.
- Keep your detectors free of dust for best performance.
- Be sure to replace your wired-in alarms every 10 years.

Air Conditioners

- Remove and clean your window and portable AC units. You can save even more on energy costs by unplugging your AC units in the winter months. This will eliminate the low heat source that can attract small animals.
- Properly insulate your windows to reduce drafts.
- Turn off any outside AC units.
- Clear away debris from the unit using a broom and wash off any dirt, droppings and dust stuck to the exterior. Inspect your air conditioner for rust, cracks in the casing and broken or split seals.
- Check for leaks and make sure all seals are tight. If you find any issues or irregularities, you may need to call in a professional to inspect.
- Cover your AC unit with a waterproof cover specifically designed for air conditioners.

More Things to Check Outside

Barbecue or Grill

- If you're a winter grilling chef, bon appetit! If not, clean and protect your appliance from warmth-seeking critters by wrapping the appliance tightly or putting it inside a garage or shed.

Patio Furniture

- Keep your patio furniture in good condition for next spring by cleaning it and storing it inside your home, shed or garage.

Pots and Planters

- Empty, clean and store pots and planters in a shed, garage or indoors to prevent them from cracking when the temperature plummets.

Garden Hose

- Be sure to store your garden hose in a warm spot in your house or garage after disconnecting and draining it. This will prevent cracking and will keep it in prime condition for spring.

Rain Barrel

- Empty your rain barrel and remove all spigots and hoses. Turn the barrel upside down to prevent the collection and freezing of water. Attach a flexible extension to your downspout to keep water away from your foundation.

Water Fountain

- To avoid cracks, completely drain your fountain and clean thoroughly. If it is small, you can put it inside. If it's too large, insulate it and cover it carefully to keep it safe in freezing temperatures. Unplug, remove and clean the pump, and store in a warm, dry place.