

Five Ways to Prepare Your Home Before a Freeze

The cooler weather conjures up images of fireplaces, holiday gatherings and hot chocolate. While it may be easy to prepare your lifestyle for the winter months, as a home owner it is important not to neglect essential pre-winter home maintenance. To keep you and your home safe and ready for cold temperatures, consider taking the following steps.

Prepare outdoor pipes. Before cooler temperatures arrive, you must take steps to insulate your outdoor pipes to prevent damage. How does damage to your pipes occur? When water freezes, it expands which in turn causes your pipes to expand leading to cracks or potential bursts. To avoid broken pipes, drain them so any excess water is removed. If you have any hoses laying around in your yard, drain and store them away for the spring.

Clear out gutters. Cleaning gutters is a chore for most home owners. Yet, this pre-winter outdoor project can protect your home from future water damage. If your gutters are full of debris, it can back up rain or melting snow that would otherwise be properly drained by gutters leading to potential roof or foundation damage.

Schedule a heating system check-up. Don't wait until your heater breaks to call a professional! Schedule an appointment with a heating system expert for a check-up to make sure your system is functioning optimally. Even if you have a new heating system, don't forget to change the filter. A furnace filter that is dirty reduces the efficiency of your system, which could increase your heating bill. A good rule of thumb is to replace your furnace filter every three months while it is in use.

Seal doors and windows. During the winter months, heat always tries to find a way to escape from your home. Cracks and gaps around your windows and doors are most common. A simple addition of caulk or weatherstripping can keep the heat inside your home. Any crack that is bigger than the width of a nickel should be caulked.

Prepare a cold weather safety kit. Severe winter storms cause power outages, potentially putting you and your family at a safety risk. Before winter hits, consider assembling a home winter safety kit for you and your family. Some items to consider are a working fire extinguisher, back up generator and shovel or deicing fluid to remove snow from entryways and sidewalks.

To learn more about routine home maintenance and other tips to protect your home in cold or winter months, contact Mid-Shores Home Builders Association or visit www.midshoreshomebuilders.com.

