



Fall Maintenance Check List

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All homes require extra care and maintenance in the fall and this list is intended to help you give your home the attention it deserves. The list is long but hopefully not everything will apply in your case. Good Luck!

Outside:

Gutters – Remove leaves and debris. Leaves may need removal more than once. Insure proper downspout operation. If gutters and downspouts provide drainage at critical areas, install heating cables to facilitate use in winter.

Roof – Look for loose or missing roof covering and observe its general condition. Remove leaves, sticks and debris. If you have asphalt (tar) flashing, check for cracks and shrinkage, repair as necessary. Remove bird nests from roof vents. If your home experienced hail damage over the summer, contact your insurance agent.

Storm Windows – Install as necessary. Be sure weep holes at sills remain open. If you have removable wood screens, store them where they will not warp but not in direct contact with a concrete floor.

Windows – Prepare for moisture condensation on interior surfaces in winter. Apply paint/stain/sealant to protect wood components as necessary. Check weather stripping. Fully close and latch windows to reduce condensation and frost in winter.

Siding – Look for cracks and holes. Apply caulk and paint if necessary. If you have stucco siding or suspect water intrusion or moisture in walls, have it tested by a professional.

Vents and air intakes – Check covers and screens. Clean if necessary.

Landscape – Insure proper downhill slope for drainage away from the home. Cover and protect sensitive plants. Trim shrubs and trees but trim oak only in winter months. Call a professional if near power lines. Remove dirt from valuable flowerpots and planters, tip on side to reduce cracking. Winterize water features and pumps. Install

heaters in birdbaths. Clean out window wells, under decks and hard to reach areas.

Driveways – Seal cracks. Keep water out of cracks. Freezing water will expand and make cracks grow.

Swimming Pools, Spas, etc. – Lower water levels and winterize all water lines, skimmers, pumps, heaters, filters, etc., or call a professional. If you have a year-round spa, be sure the cover and insulation are in place and controls are set to maintain a temperature above freezing.

Air Conditioning – To cover or not to cover? If you do, don't wrap in plastic, condensation can build up inside and cause corrosion. Sloped plywood on top is best, but be sure to remove prior to Spring start-up.

Outside Faucets – Disconnect hose from faucets, even frost proof faucets. If faucet is non-frost proof or you are unsure, close inside shut-off valves and open outside faucet to drain, leave faucet open. If faucets have an external vacuum breaker or backflow prevention device, carefully manipulate the plunger in-and-out to allow water to drain.

Underground Sprinkler – Close the inside shut-off valve and prevent accidental opening in winter. Blow out and drain the entire system. Unplug or turn off controls. Call a professional if you are unsure or not able to blow out the entire system.

Septic Systems – Test high water alarm. If inspections are current and your system is operating properly, no special maintenance should be necessary, but it may be wise to pump the tank every few years. If you deferred municipal inspections, consider having them done before the ground freezes and fees increase. If you have a shallow

tank, a seasonal home or a reduced number of occupants (such as 1 person in a 4 bedroom home), then you may be wise to pile leaves/straw over the septic system to provide additional protection from freezing.

Wells – In most cases, no special maintenance is necessary, just clean around the pump and/or pressure tank to prevent mold growth. If the well is located in an unheated pump room or pit, it may need protection from freezing during cold spells. If so, be sure a temporary heat source is available. If in doubt, install an indoor/outdoor thermometer.

Inside:

Filters and Ducts – Clean or replace all filters. Check the furnace, humidifier, air exchange system, kitchen exhaust hood, clothes dryer duct, etc.

Safety and Emergency Systems – Test smoke alarms and Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms. Don't have one? Get one. Test GFCI outlets and circuit breakers. Check fire egress and emergency escape windows and insure proper access. Test emergency generators and switching devices, replace fuel or add fuel preservative. Check fire extinguishers and flashlights. Review fire escape plan with family.

Attic – Look for roof leaks and water condensation. Observe roof vents for obstructions. Check exhaust fan ducts and be sure they vent outside and not into attic.

Garage Door and Operator – Lubricate wheels and track. Check automatic safety reverse mechanisms.

Heating System – Look for rust and corrosion, if present call a professional. If you have hot water heat, check water pressure (usually 10-14 psi is best), add water if necessary. Check the flame, if natural gas or propane, the flame should be mostly blue. Clean and service as necessary. Check and clean air filters. Add oil to motors if necessary. Do not store items near furnace, boiler or flues. Keep combustible material away from baseboard heat. Check thermostat setback settings. If in doubt, call a professional.

Fireplace – Check the damper and flue; look for obstructions, loose brick and excessive build-up. Clean and service as necessary or call a professional chimney sweep. Obtain clean seasoned firewood; hardwood is best. Cleaning obscured glass on a gas fireplace requires special chemicals and disassembly of the front

panel. Be sure to reassemble the front panel just as it was. Follow manufacturer recommendations for lighting a gas fireplace. If you have gas logs that are manually controlled, the damper should be equipped with a device that prevents closing, make sure the device is in place and the damper is open before lighting gas logs. If you have a coal-burning fireplace and are unsure of correct operation, call a professional.

Water Pipes – Be sure all water lines have adequate freeze protection. Shut-off and drain garage and outbuilding fixtures as necessary. Check crawl spaces, hidden corners, etc. Test low temperature warning alarms. If you have a seasonal home that is unheated in winter, be sure to drain water lines and add RV anti-freeze to traps at all fixtures and toilets. If you are unsure how to winterize plumbing in a seasonal home, call a professional.

Water Leaks – Fix them! Water is the #1 enemy of a house.

Other:

Heating Fuel – Fill fuel oil and propane tanks as necessary.

Refrigerators and Freezers – Vacuum louvered vents and refrigerant coils located under or behind the unit. Check weather-strip on doors. If you shut down a seasonal-use refrigerator or freezer, un-plug and leave doors open to reduce mold.

Pets – Check kennels and doghouses and be sure they provide adequate protection in winter.

Mice, Squirrels, Critters – They will be looking for winter homes, if they are not welcome in yours, seal and close all openings and holes. Check the base of storm doors, garage doors, etc. Check the air conditioner refrigerant line as it enters the home. Seal all openings and holes.

Please feel free to give this list to family and friends and let them know where it came from.



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