10 Tips To Winterize Your Home – by Elizabeth Weintraub

1) Furnace Inspection
   • Call an HVAC professional to inspect your furnace and clean ducts.
   • Stock up on furnace filters and change them monthly.
   • Consider switching out your thermostat for a programmable thermostat.
   • If your home is heated by a hot-water radiator, bleed the valves by opening them slightly and when water appears, close them.
   • Remove all flammable material from the area surrounding your furnace.

2) Get the Fireplace/Woodstove Ready
   • Cap or screen the top of the chimney to keep out rodents and birds.
   • If the chimney hasn't been cleaned for a while, call a chimney sweep to remove soot and creosote.
   • Buy firewood or chop wood. Store it in a dry place away from the exterior of your home.
   • Inspect the damper for proper opening and closing.
   • Check the mortar between bricks and tuckpoint, if necessary.

3) Check the Exterior, Doors and Windows
   • Inspect exterior for crevice cracks and exposed entry points around pipes; seal them.
   • Use weatherstripping around doors to prevent cold air from entering the home and caulk windows.
   • Replace cracked glass in windows and, if you end up replacing the entire window, prime and paint exposed wood.
   • If your home has a basement, consider protecting its window wells by covering them with plastic shields.
   • Switch out summer screens with glass replacements from storage. If you have storm windows, install them.

4) Inspect Roof, Gutters & Downspouts
   • If your weather temperature will fall below 32 degrees in the winter, adding extra insulation to the attic will prevent warm air from creeping to your roof and causing ice dams.
   • Check flashing to ensure water cannot enter the home.
   • Replace worn roof shingles or tiles.
   • Clean out the gutters and use a hose to spray water down the downspouts to clear away debris.
• Consider installing leaf guards on the gutters or extensions on the downspouts to direct water away from the home.

5) Service Weather-Specific Equipment
• Drain gas from lawnmowers.
• Service or tune-up snow blowers.
• Replace worn rakes and snow shovels.
• Clean, dry and store summer gardening equipment.
• Sharpen ice choppers and buy bags of ice-melt / sand.

6) Check Foundations
• Rake away all debris and edible vegetation from the foundation.
• Seal up entry points to keep small animals from crawling under the house.
• Tuckpoint or seal foundation cracks. Mice can slip through space as thin as a dime.
• Inspect sill plates for dry rot or pest infestation.
• Secure crawlspace entrances.

7) Install Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
• Some cities require a smoke detector in every room.
• Buy extra smoke detector batteries and change them when daylight savings ends.
• Install a carbon monoxide detector near your furnace and / or water heater.
• Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they work.
• Buy a fire extinguisher or replace an extinguisher older than 10 years.

8) Prevent Plumbing Freezes
• Locate your water main in the event you need to shut it off in an emergency.
• Drain all garden hoses.
• Insulate exposed plumbing pipes.
• Drain air conditioner pipes and, if your AC has a water shut-off valve, turn it off.
• If you go on vacation, leave the heat on, set to at least 55 degrees.

9) Prepare Landscaping & Outdoor Surfaces
• Trim trees if branches hang too close to the house or electrical wires.
• Ask a gardener when your trees should be pruned to prevent winter injury.
• Plant spring flower bulbs and lift bulbs that cannot winter over such as dahlias in areas where the ground freezes.
• Seal driveways, brick patios and wood decks.
• Move sensitive potted plants indoors or to a sheltered area.

10) Prepare an Emergency Kit
• Buy indoor candles and matches / lighter for use during a power shortage.
• Find the phone numbers for your utility companies and tape them near your phone or inside the phone book.
• Buy a battery back-up to protect your computer and sensitive electronic equipment.
• Store extra bottled water and non-perishable food supplies (including pet food, if you have a pet), blankets and a first-aid kit in a dry and easy-to-access location.
• Prepare an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency.