

How to Prepare Your Home for Fall



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR FALL

LIVE WELL UTAH

Now is the time to prepare for those impending cold winter months.

It's here, you can feel it in the air—fall, and fall brings the falling temperatures that herald winter. The fall Equinox is a good time of year to start thinking about preparing your home for winter, because as temperatures begin to change, your home will require maintenance to keep it in tip-top shape through the winter.

As winter approaches with its guarantee of ice, snow, and frigid temperatures, taking action early is all the more helpful for you. You're better off preventing any potential problems now, because once the chill of winter arrives anything that goes wrong in your home will inevitably be nothing but a headache to fix. Careful planning and preparation will ensure your utilities will run efficiently and your home will be protected during the winter, and in the end will save you time, money, and frustration.

Here is a checklist of considerations:

Outside:

- Check all weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors. Replace or repair as needed.
- Check for cracks and holes in house siding; fill with caulking as necessary.
- Remove window air conditioners, or put weather-proof covers on them.
- Take down screens (if removable type) and clean and store them.
- Drain and shut off all outside faucets and sprinkler lines.
- Clean gutters and drain pipes so they won't be clogged with leaves. Consider installing leaf guards on the

gutters or extensions on the downspouts to direct water away from the home.

- Check roof for leaks and repair.
- Check flashing around vents, skylights, and chimneys for leaks.
- Check chimney for damaged chimney caps and loose or missing mortar.
- Check chimney flue; clean obstructions and make sure damper closes tightly.
- Clean siding. Paint or seal if you have wood siding.
- Inspect wood framing from termites and re-treat as necessary.
- Trim trees away from the house. Have dead trees and branches removed by professional tree trimmers, or do it yourself.
- Insulate any water pipes that are exposed to freezing cold.
- Make sure you are stocked with rock salt, sand, snow shovels and any other items you will need during the winter.
- Buy firewood or chop wood. Store it in a dry place away from the exterior of your home.
- If your home has a basement, consider protecting its window wells by covering them with plastic shields.
- Drain gas from lawnmowers.
- Apply sealant to decks to help prevent wood damage from extreme freezing/thawing cycles.
- Service or tune-up snow blowers.
- Replace worn rakes and snow shovels.
- Clean, dry and store summer gardening equipment.
- Winterize your lawn, which includes fertilizing and possibly re-seeding, to keep the grass strong and able to reserve food over the winter. Check with your local nursery or county USU Extension horticulturist for specific questions about your lawn.
- Clean and store your outdoor lawn and patio furniture to protect them from winter damage.

- Drain out your outdoor hoses and sprinklers and bring them inside so they cannot freeze or crack. Also drain the water in birdbaths and cover them.

Inside:

- Check insulation as much as possible; replace or add as necessary. Gas/electric companies may have an insulation program going—check with them for possible assistance and insulation checks.
- Have heating system and heat pump serviced; have humidifier checked; change or clean air filter on furnace.
- Drain hot water heater and remove sediment from bottom of tank; clean burner surfaces; adjust burners.
- Check all faucets for leaks; replace washer if needed.
- Check and clean humidifier in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean refrigerator coils.
- Test and check batteries on smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Install or replace weather stripping on all doors and windows. Check for cracks around pipes and electrical outlets entering or exiting the walls.
- Prepare an emergency kit—flashlights, candles, batteries, bottled water, blankets, etc. This is the time of year for power outages and having things readily available is smart. This is also flu season, so preparing your home with supplies for treating the flu might be helpful too.
- Buy a battery backup to protect your computer and sensitive electronic equipment.
- Replace warm-weather clothing with cold-weather clothing, and warm-weather bedding with cold weather bedding.
- Place a boot tray by the door for people to place their wet boots and shoes in before they enter the home.

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