

Preparing Your Home for Winter



**PREPARING
YOUR HOME
FOR WINTER**

LIVE WELL UTAH

It's time to start preparing for the winter months. Preparation now will help prevent damage to your home later and will save energy and money. You can spread these home projects out over several weeks to make it easier.

1. **Check seals around doors and windows:** You may be surprised by the little cracks and spaces that heat can escape through during the winter. Look around window frames for any cracks on the outside and apply caulk. Check on air leakage around electrical outlets and switch plates. You can install insulation or outlet gaskets very easily.
2. **Inspect furnace and filters:** Have the furnace checked for efficiency and clean or replace filters. If a furnace has a dirty filter, it will not function as efficiently. Air vents also fall into this category; be sure to vacuum them and check for possible leaks that decrease efficiency in the home.
3. **Reverse ceiling fan blades.** Most ceiling fans have a switch to reverse the direction of the blades. The clockwise rotation forces warm air down where people can enjoy it rather than allowing it to escape to the ceiling area.
4. **Clean chimneys:** Since ash and creosote can build up in a chimney, it is important to have a professional clean it at least every other year, or more if you use it frequently. You can use a flashlight to check for bird nests or other items that may be blocking any part of the chimney.
5. **Drain outdoor hoses and faucets:** Water expands when it freezes and can ruin faucets and hoses if they aren't properly taken care of. After draining pipes, store hoses indoors. Cover outdoor faucets with insulated frost-free hose bib covers.

6. **Wrap indoor pipes:** Pipes may be exposed to the cold in the basement, inside cabinets or in the attic. To avoid them bursting from freezing, wrap them in heat tape or tubular pipe insulation sleeves.
7. **Winterize evaporative cooler:** Turn off the power and water to the cooler. Turn off water pump and fan, remove them and store indoors. Drain water out of lines and out of the swamp cooler pan. Disconnect the water supply line to the cooler and drain or blow it out to keep any residual water from being trapped in lines and freezing. Place cover or tarp over the cooler and tie it down securely. To prevent warm air from escaping through the ceiling inside the home, close the air diffuser vents and place a diffuser cover over the vent or place an evaporative cooler pillow plug inside the diffuser.
8. **Make necessary repairs on roof:** Take a look at your roof and look for any possible places for leaking, missing shingles or weak corners, especially on older homes.
9. **Clean out rain gutters and make repairs:** This is especially important for preventing unnecessary damage. After all the leaves have fallen, you can clean out your gutter and check for possible broken parts. This helps prevent gutter damming, which happens when draining water gets backed up and leaks into the home.
10. **Mow leaves into the lawn:** This will act as mulch and help nourish your lawn during the winter. There is a helpful tutorial at USU Extension's Live Well Utah blog [here](#).
11. **Prepare the lawn mower for rest:** Use all the gas in the lawn mower or add stabilizer to keep it from decomposing over the winter and causing problems when it's time to use it again.
12. **Pull out the snow removal equipment:** Gather snow blower, fuel, snow shovels and chemical ice melt, and place in a readily accessible location.
13. **Check or replace emergency supplies:** Inspect fire extinguishers, batteries, candles, flashlights and

propane lanterns or heaters.

14. **Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors:** Make sure they are working properly. Carbon monoxide is a dangerous, odorless gas produced by gas furnaces and ranges.
15. **Replace light bulbs in exterior light fixtures:** This will provide safety in lighting up walkways and steps during the dark winter nights.

This article was written by Kirsten Lamplugh, USU Extension Intern, Salt Lake County and Marilyn Albertson, Utah State University Extension Associate Professor, Salt Lake County

Resources:

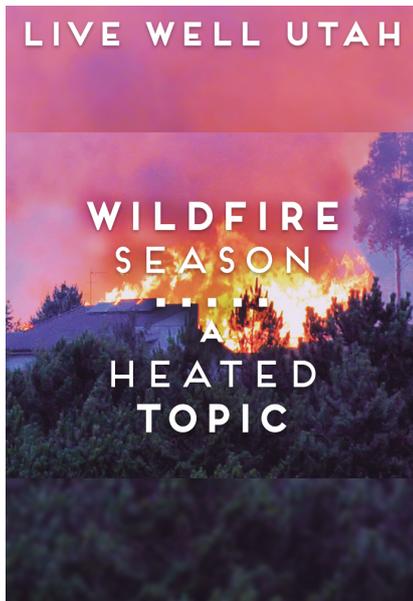
energy.gov *Cozy Up to Colder Weather: 5 Ways to Prepare Your Home for Fall and Winter (parts 1 and 2)*

[Style at Home](#) *How to Prepare Your Home for Winter.*

<https://extension.usu.edu/htm/news-multimedia/articleID=2129>

*Ask a specialist: Do you have tips for winterizing my home?
Richard Beard, Utah State University Extension Agricultural Engineering Specialist, 2006*

Wildfire Season is Ablaze in Utah // Is Your House Safe?



Wildfires are a very heated topic in Utah right now. With such dry conditions and high temperatures, wildfires can't help but take the spotlight.

Fight Fire With... Yard Work?!

Did you know that the likelihood of a home burning is directly related to the amount of flammable material near it? To lessen the chance of a fire destroying your home, follow these 9 simple, life-saving tips:

- 1. Replace wood roofs with fire-resistant roofing material.** Enclose the eaves of your home with soffits and screen openings with 1/8" galvanized mesh. This will reduce the chances of blowing embers entering your attic space and igniting your home.
- 2. Think about the places around your home where leaves collect** after a windstorm; this is where burning embers will also collect, making it important to regularly clear leaves and pine needles from the valleys of roofs, gutters and deck

corners.

3. Remove debris from the yard and mow, irrigate and prune. The first 3 to 5 feet from the home should be a no-burn zone consisting of pavers, concrete or small, succulent plants. In the zone between 6 and 100 feet out, the landscape should be clean and green, with dead leaves, needles and twigs removed. There should be few highly flammable trees and shrubs in this zone, and trees should be pruned. To be effective, this must be done on a regular basis, depending on the type and amount of vegetation.

4. Select appropriate species to grow in the home ignition zone. Evergreens and scrub oaks tend to be highly flammable, while aspen and many broad-leafed ornamentals tend to be less flammable. Plants that are green and moist during the hottest, driest part of the year are best.

5. The wildlands beyond 100 feet should be thinned. Avoid dumping brush in this zone. Often we do not control the land 100 feet from our homes, but a plan can still be in place. Contact neighbors and talk with them about safety and what you can do together. This includes individual neighbors but may also include government neighbors like the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management.

6. Keep firewood, construction material and other flammable items at least 30 feet from your home. Consider burying your propane tank and be sure it is located at least 100 feet from any structure with vegetation cleared 10 feet around each tank.

7. Make sure emergency personnel can easily locate and identify your home. Be sure house numbers are clearly marked and visible.

8. Provide ample turnaround and overhead space for the ingress and egress of large firefighting equipment.

9. Take the time to protect your home. Homes that do not meet minimum safety standards are more likely to be bypassed by firefighters seeking to limit unnecessary risks to the safety of the crew and vehicles.

For a list of recommended plants and more information on landscaping to minimize fire hazard, visit USU Extension forestry's website at forestry.usu.edu or call 435-797-0560

Author – Julene Reese

References

Darren McAvoy, USU Extension program associate, Department of Wildland Resources, 435-797-0560, darren.mcavoy@usu.edu

Michael Kuhns, USU Extension forestry specialist, 435-797-4056, mike.kuhns@usu.edu
