

Winter Home Maintenance Tips

- Remove screens from windows and install storm windows
- Clean out gutters and downspouts
- Insulate pipes in your home's crawl spaces and attic
- Store firewood at least 30 feet away from your home
- Familiarize responsible family members with the gas main valve and other appliance valves
- Clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper and space under the dryer
- Make sure all electrical holiday decorations have tight connections
- Check the attic for adequate ventilation
- Clean the kitchen exhaust hood and air filter
- Check the water hoses on the clothes washer, refrigerator icemaker and dishwasher for cracks and bubbles
- Test all ground-fault-circuit-interrupter (GFCI) outlets

Remove the screens from the storm window frames and install storm windows.

Storm windows help reduce the cost to heat your home and help prevent windowsills from rotting.

Clean out gutters and downspouts.

Cleaning debris and fallen leaves reduces the chances of an ice dam forming. One good step is to spray water down the downspouts to wash away leaves and other debris. A good tip is to place gutter screens over gutters.

Extreme caution should be exercised when working on or around the roof. Consider hiring a professional.

Insulate pipes in your home's crawl spaces and attic.

These exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing. Remember: the more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be.

Store firewood at least 30 feet away from your home.

This will reduce a home's fire load and the chance of attracting termites.

Familiarize responsible family members with the main gas valve and other appliance valves.

Responsible family members should be familiar with the location and operation of valves. If you are unsure of the location and operation of these valves, contact a qualified plumber.

Clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper and space under the dryer.

Poor maintenance allows lint to build up in the exhaust duct and may cause a fire.

Make sure all electrical holiday decorations have tight connections.

If possible, use 3-prong plugs and cords. The use of 2-prong adapters, which permit 3-prong plugs to be used in 2-prong outlets, doesn't always provide grounding to protect against shock. Unplug decorations when not in use.

Use of extension cords should be temporary. To help reduce the chances of overheating, electric cords, including extension cords, should never be bundled together or run under rugs and carpet.

Check the attic for adequate ventilation.

Check the exterior wall to be sure the ceiling insulation is not blocking the outside air from the soffit vents from getting into the attic. Make sure the attic has plenty of vents. Caution should be taken in all attic spaces that are unfinished.

Clean the kitchen exhaust hood and air filter.

Keeping this clean of cooking grease will help keep a stovetop fire from spreading.

Check water hoses on the clothes washer, refrigerator icemaker and dishwasher for cracks and bubbles.

Replace hoses that show signs of leaking.

Test all ground-fault-circuit-interrupter (GFCI) outlets.

These need to be tripped and reset once a month. If they do not trip or reset, have the outlet changed by a qualified electrician. These types of outlets are required around wet areas like bathrooms and kitchens to offer protection against shock. Only a qualified electrician should make changes in your home's electrical system.