

# Prepping your Home for Winter

## 1. Ensure free-flowing water

- Drain water from outdoor faucets and sprinkler systems to keep those pipes from freezing. Consider calling a pro to blow out any water left in irrigation lines.
- Disconnect and store outdoor hoses.
- Cover outdoor faucets with foam insulators.
- Protect water pipes that run through unheated areas of your home with insulation (e.g.: attic, basement, garage).
- Seal air leaks near water pipes to keep cold water from blowing on pipes.
- Know where your water shutoff valve is (typically in the basement or buried near the road)

## Prevent ice dams

- Clean out clogged gutters and downspouts to keep water flowing during the winter.
- Seal places that may allow warm air to leak from your home to your attic, such as around vent pipes, exhaust fans, chimneys, attic hatches and light fixtures.
- Be sure soffit vents are not blocked so that air can flow through them.
- If you can reach your roof with a rake from the ground, remove snow accumulation from the roof before it can melt and refreeze. If not, call a professional.

## Inspect your fireplace/chimney

- A chimney sweep can clean out soot and other debris that could catch fire when you light up the first logs.
- Check the flue to be sure it closes all the way – you shouldn't be able to feel any air around it. You can also install glass fireplace doors or a chimney balloon to help keep warm air in and cold air out.

## Seal windows and doors

- Caulk around windows and install weather stripping around doors as needed.
- Upgrade to double- or triple- pane windows if windows and doors are older.
- Add storm windows and doors. Remove, wash and store screens for the spring before installing storm windows or doors.

## Keep the heat on

- Check the furnace. Turn on the heat and the blower to be sure they're operating as they should.
- Change the furnace filter.
- Consider installing a programmable thermostat.
- Reverse ceiling fans. Set fans to turn clockwise to push warm air from the ceiling down into the room.

## Clean and store summer equipment

- Empty equipment of fuel, as gas degrades over time. Remove the gas with a meat baster, then run the engine until it stops.
- Replace the oil, spark plugs and air filters on mowers. Clean the machine of oil and yard debris and sharpen the blades.
- Check the owner's manual for any specific requirements for your machines.

## Stock up on winter essentials

### FOR YOUR HOME

- Battery-powered flashlights
- Several days worth of ready-to-eat food
- A gallon of water per person per day
- A supply of medications – prescription and over-the-counter – that you take regularly
- Fully charged cell phone
- A working, fully charged fire extinguisher
- An alternative heat source such as a generator, wood-burning stove or fireplace to help keep you warm
- Sand, kitty litter, ice melt or a shovel to get ice and snow off your sidewalk, patio or driveway.

### FOR YOUR CAR

- A blanket, hat and gloves; consider hand and foot warmers for everyone in the car.
- Sand, kitty litter, ice melt or a shovel to get your car out of an icy patch.
- Water, snacks, a flashlight and plenty of gas in the tank in case you're stuck for a long period.
- Flares or lights to put around your car at night so that other drivers can see it.
- A fully charged cell phone.