

HOW TO GET YOUR HOME READY FOR WINTER AND SAVE

Wintertime is especially hard on houses and compounding the problem are high fuel costs: gas, oil, electricity. The good news is that there is plenty that you can do to reduce damage to your home from snow and ice, and lower energy costs in the

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bargain.

As cool weather signals colder weather to come, it also brings out the door-to-door so-called "inspectors," notes the Better Business Bureau. These fellows may claim to represent a utility company or contractor and want to check out your home's heating plant. Of course, you always need repairs, according to the inspector, and he will personally handle the job for several hundred dollars.

Reputable, reliable heating contractors, points out the BBB, don't solicit business door-to-door; utility companies or local government departments do not send out "inspectors." If you get such a caller at your door, don't arrange for work to be done without first checking with the BBB.

Winterizing your home usually doesn't require a large expenditure of money; it will, however, take a weekend or two of your time. Below is a run-down of major building components and appliances that generally need attention before the snows fall and temperatures drop. Use it as a checklist and follow it through for more savings and comfort in the months ahead.

- Clean gutters, downspouts, and roof valleys after all leaves have fallen. If gutter ice jams have been a problem in the past, consider installing inexpensive heat cables in the trouble spots.

- While you're on the ladder cleaning gutters, carefully climb onto the roof (if the pitch is low) and seal the roof flashings around chimney bases, vents, and roof valleys. Use asphalt roofing cement for this. If you notice any curled shingles, stick them down with a dab of roofing cement. Any badly damaged shingles should be replaced.

- Replace any broken or cracked window glass.

Install storm windows and doors and be sure to seal basement windows with storms or window wells with covers.

- Weatherstrip doors, windows, the bottom of garage doors, and basement windows. Weatherstripping is very inexpensive; fuel isn't.

A crack around your front door, for example, is equal to a 6-inch square hole in the center of the door. A 1/2-inch crack under an unheated attic door can cost you an estimated \$25 in fuel during the winter. Weatherstripping for the door costs less than \$2.

- Replace the furnace filter at the start of the heating season. Replace it every month or so during the heating season.

- Add insulation, if it presently is inadequate. Your attic should have a minimum of 6 inches of batt or blanket insulation, or 8 to 9 inches of loose fill insulation. Don't overlook basement crawl spaces with insulation, or porches, decks, or landings that are enclosed but not insulated. The foil or kraft paper facing on the insulation must face the heated area.

If freezing pipes have been a problem in the past, either insulate them with a good pipe/duct wrap, or install thermostat-controlled heating cables. The cables automatically turn-on when the temperature approaches the freezing mark.

Seal all duct joints with duct tape; insulate ducts that run through unheated areas with duct insulation or wrap.

- Caulk all cracks and splits in wood siding, around windows and doors, dissimilar materials such as wood and masonry, at plumbing and electrical outlets.

The furnace and hot water heater in your home should be inspected and cleaned before the start of every heating season. It is best to have a professional do this. The pro can make any necessary adjustments to both appliances, saving you plenty in fuel costs and breakdowns that always seem to occur on the coldest days.

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INDIANAPOLIS—Indiana's forward Billy Knight (25) attempts to block the path of New York's guard Michael Ray Richardson (20) as he drives for the basket during first period action recently. UPI Photo

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