



Neighborhood Chatter

"sharing news neighbors can use"

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Winterizing Your Home

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With the temperatures slowly dropping in North Texas we've all begun to bring out our winter clothes so that we can stay warm during the day. But I wonder how many of us think about winterizing our homes for the upcoming cold months.

Hopefully these tips will help you prepare your home for the upcoming months and help you save some energy and money:

1. Preparing the Outside of Your House

- a) Trees / shrubs close to your house or electrical lines should be trimmed; this can help you avoid a tree limb through your window / roof or a limb coming down on your overhead electrical service.
- b) Drain your garden hose and put it away for the winter months; this will help prolong the life of the garden hose and keeping the exterior hose bib from freezing.
- c) Move your potted plants either indoors or to a sheltered area outside.
- d) During the coldest part of the winter months, cover out door plants and shrubs.
- e) Inspect the exterior of your house for cracks and exposed entry points around pipes or wires and seal them with an exterior sealant; this will help reduce the cold air flow into your house. Also did you know that a mouse can crawl through a space as thin as a dime? Closing up these entry points may keep some rodents from nesting in your house.
- f) Replace cracked glass in windows.
- g) If you have a pier and beam foundation, secure all your crawlspace entrances.

2. Preparing the Inside of Your House

- a) Check the weather-stripping around your doors and caulk your windows. The easiest way to check if you have an airflow problem is by burning a stick of incense around windows, doors or recessed lighting fixtures and caulk around those areas that need it.
- b) Turn your furnace on before the cold weather is here; this helps you ensure that the system is working properly before cold weather hits and gives you the opportunity to contact a professional if there is a problem with the system before it's an emergency type situation.
- c) If you have regular maintenance performed on your system you can skip this tip; contact an HVAC professional to inspect your furnace and clean your ducts.

- d) Have a supply of filters on hand so that you can change them on a monthly basis to ensure optimum efficiency.
 - e) If you have a fireplace call a chimney sweeper; they will clean the chimney and remove soot and creosote so you can enjoy hours of a roaring fire.
 - f) Put a cap or a screen on the top of your chimney to keep rodents and birds from nesting in the flue during the winter months.
 - g) Make sure you know where your water main is in the event you need to turn the water off to the entire house.
 - h) Insulate exposed exterior plumbing pipes.
 - i) Check your smoke detector; make sure the batteries are good and keep a supply on hand in case they go out.
 - j) Install a carbon monoxide detector near your gas fired appliances (water heater, furnace, stove, or fireplace).
 - k) Buy a fire extinguisher.
 - l) Fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and/or carbon monoxide detectors ought to be replaced every 10 years.
3. Prepare an Emergency Kit
- a) Buy indoor candles and matches / lighters for use during a power shortage.
 - b) Keep a list of your utility company's telephone numbers in a place so that you can easily find it.
 - c) Stock up on bottled water and non-perishable food supplies (don't forget about the pets), blankets and first aid kits.
 - d) Have an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency.
4. Winterize your Car
- a) Make sure you have a sufficient amount of antifreeze in the car.
 - b) Use a winter mix for your windshield wiper fluid.
 - c) Check the tire pressure.
 - d) Try and get a general tune-up; have your mechanic look at the heater, brakes, exhaust, etc. to ensure that your car will not strand you on the side of the road during cold weather.
 - e) Keep water, non-perishable foods, blanket(s) and a first aid kit in your car. Don't forget to keep a car charger in there, too.
5. Important Numbers
- a) Garland Power & Light (GP&L) 972-205-2300 (answered 24 hours a day)
 - b) Water Department 972-205-2310 (answered 24 hours a day)
 - c) Atmos Energy 1-888-286-6700
 - d) TXU Electric 972-791-2888