

HOME



WINTERIZATION

Winterization is the process of preparing a home for the harsh conditions of winter. It is usually performed in the fall before snow and excessive cold have arrived. Winterization protects against damage due to bursting water pipes, and from heat loss due to openings in the building envelope.



LEPPARD
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Home Winterization



Building Envelope



Windows that leak will allow cold air into the home. Feeling for drafts with your hand, or watching for horizontal smoke from a burning incense stick are a couple of simple ways to inspect for leaks. Air leaks can usually be addressed using insulation tape or caulk.



On a breezy day, you can walk through your house and find far more leaks than you knew existed. Leaks are most likely to occur in areas where a seam exists between two or more building materials.



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Insulation



Because hot air rises into the attic, a disproportionately larger amount of heat is lost there than in other parts of the house. Like a winter hat that keeps your head warm, adequate attic insulation will prevent warm indoor air from escaping. Attic insulation should be 12 around inches thick in homes located in cold climates, depending on your insulation rating.



Storm doors and windows should be installed to insulate the house and protect against bad weather.



Home Winterization



Heating System

The heating system is used most during the winter, so it's a good idea to make sure that it works before it's desperately needed. The following inspection and maintenance tips can be of some help to homeowners:



Test the furnace by raising the temperature on the thermostat. If it does not respond to the adjustment quickly, it might be broken.



Replace the air filter at least once every season of operation.



If the furnace is equipped with an oil or propane tank, the tank should be full.



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Cooling System



Use a hose to remove leaves and other debris from the outdoor condensing unit, if the home is equipped with one. Protect the unit with a breathable waterproof cover to prevent rusting and freezing of its components.



Remove and store window air conditioners when they are no longer needed. Cold air can damage their components and enter the house through openings between the air conditioner and the windowpane.



Ceiling fans can be reversed in order to warm air trapped beneath the ceiling to recirculate it. A fan has been reversed if it spins clockwise.



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Plumbing System



All exposed water pipes in cold, unoccupied area, such as attics, garages, and crawlspaces, should be insulated. Foam or fiberglass insulation can be purchased at most hardware stores. Insulation should cover the pipe completely.



The water supply for exterior pipes should be shut off from inside the house and then drained.



Sprinkler systems are particularly vulnerable to cracking due to cold-weather expansion. In addition to turning it off, it helps to purge the system of any remaining water with compressed air.



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Chimney & Fireplace



The damper should open and close with ease. Smoke should rise up the chimney when the damper is open. If it doesn't, this means that there is an obstruction in the chimney that must be cleared before the fireplace can be used.



A chimney-cleaning service professional should clean the chimney if it has not been cleaned for several years.



The damper should be closed when the fireplace is not in use. An open damper might not be as obvious to the homeowner as an open window, but it can allow a significant amount of warm air to escape.



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Roof



If debris is left in gutters, it can get wet and freeze, permitting the formation of ice dams that prevent water from draining. This added weight has the potential to cause damage to gutters. Also, trapped water in the gutter can enter the house and lead to the growth of mold. For these reasons, leaves, pine needles, and all other debris must be cleared from gutters. This can be done by hand or with a hose.



Missing shingles should be replaced.



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Landscaping



Patio furniture should be covered.



If there is a deck, it might need an extra coat of sealant.



Not all plants in your garden can withstand the harsh winters. If needed, you can use burlap to wrap or tent these plants to help protect them.



Home Winterization



Winterizing an Unoccupied Home



Winterize toilets by emptying them completely. Antifreeze can be poured into toilets and other plumbing fixtures.



Winterize faucets by opening them and leaving them open.



Water tanks and pumps need to be drained completely.



Drain all water from indoor and outdoor plumbing.



Unplug all non-essential electrical appliances, especially the refrigerator. If no electrical appliances are needed, the electricity can be shut off at the main breaker.

