



As winter approaches, it's important to make sure your house is safe and properly protected. Here a list of the 10 most important chores to get done to ensure a safe and cost-efficient winter:

1. **Clear Out Fireplace:** Every other year, you should have a chimney sweep check for bird nests and clean out the chimney, to reduce your risk of fire.
2. **Clean Out Gutters:** Run your hose through your gutter downspouts to make sure they are clear of leaves and debris and that they dump water far enough from the foundation of your home. If leaves can get compacted in the guttering system water can easily back up into the inside of the exterior walls upon melting after an ice storm.
3. **Check the Heating System:** Hire an HVAC professional to check your heating system to include cleaning the furnace, lubricating parts and changing the filter as well as making sure the humidifier is functioning and has a new filter.
4. **Put Away Lawn Furniture:** By mid-October, you should have your lawn furniture stored in a dry place to avoid it rusting or breaking due to heavy wind.
5. **Check Roof for Loose Shingles:** Your roof is your main protector from weather, and if your shingles are not secure, you could be dealing not only with a cold home this winter, but perhaps a wet one. If there are any tall trees whose limbs extend over your roof, make sure to cut them back to prevent roof damage during a snowstorm.
6. **Drain Out Water Spigots:** Drain and shut off external taps to avoid bursting in the dead of winter, including removing hoses from spigots.
7. **Weatherstrip Windows & Exterior Doors:** You can save up to 15 percent on energy costs by making sure your windows and doors are sealed from the outdoors. To do this yourself you can do the "paper test" : Shut a door or window on a piece of paper. If you can pull it out without the paper tearing, you need sealing. Most all main exterior doors have seals that need to be changed every few years, they can be easily changed by pulling out the old and inserting the new.
8. **Clean Out Garage:** As you are putting away lawn furniture, bicycles and gardening tools, take the time to clean out the garage to get ready for the winter's car messes.
9. **Cleanup the Yard:** Trim all trees and bushes at least 12 inches from walls to prevent wood rot and mildew, as well as picking up all leaves from the lawn as compacted leaves will destroy the grass.
10. **Check The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** Make sure a working carbon monoxide detector are installed on every floor and a smoke detector in installed outside every separate sleeping area in the home.

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