

Winterizing Your Historic Home

There are a simple, economical and effective measures that you can take that will make your home more energy-efficient and comfortable!

1. Carefully Examine all Door and Window Openings.

If you can see light coming through, or feel a breeze coming in- close up those gaps!

Add or replace worn out weather stripping around doors and window openings, and caulk gaps where necessary. If caulk is necessary around panes of glass or around the sides of the window, try to plan your work for a dry day, with a temp of at least 45 degrees F. Such conditions keep caulk from swelling with moisture and ensure that it adheres properly.

Choose weather stripping made of rubber, felt or foam. You may also need to apply or re-apply a snug door sweep to the bottom of your doors to prevent leaks. To achieve the same effect without using any tools to attach it, you may consider purchasing a door draft blocker (or several!) to lay on the floor flush against the bottom of the door or even on window sills.

Plastic window "insulation" kits really are effective quick fixes and can help shore up doors and windows, but please consider some of the other options above for more permanent solutions to leaks.

Second to your roof, doors and window openings are the most likely culprits of unnecessary energy loss, but are the easiest to repair and replace to ensure that isn't the case in your house!

Don't forget basement and attic windows!

2. Other Leaks to Look Out For:

Use the same caulk or weather stripping around all entry points for pipes and ducts that go through an exterior wall. Don't forget your dryer vent.

Check for drafts behind electrical outlets by removing the outlet plate. Pre-cut, easy to install, foam insulation is available for outlets.

3. Is Your Home Properly Insulated?

Do you know the R-factor of your insulation?

4. Heating System Check-Up

For convenience, schedule a routine maintenance check up for your furnace sooner rather than later- don't get caught in the last minute rush!

Clean and vacuum the vents and other components for maximum efficiency and good health.

Double check that vents aren't blocked by furniture or other obstacles.

Replace the furnace filter, and either get on, or stay on track with the manufacturer's suggested maintenance plan.

Consider a set-back thermostat that will allow you to always come home to and wake up to a warm house, but will lower the temp automatically when you're away or asleep.

5. Fireplace Safety

Visually inspect your chimney for signs of smoke and water damage or leaks. (Using binoculars while standing in your yard is the safest method.) Employ a chimney sweep to inspect and clean the inside of your chimney and to inspect the firebox. Install a screen at the top of the chimney to keep debris and unwanted visitors out.

When not in use, keep the damper closed. You may wish to use something placed near the fireplace or in the firebox that reminds you that the damper is closed to prevent an unpleasant and sooty experience.

6. **Maintaining Proper Ventilation**

Although you want to minimize heat loss, proper ventilation is crucial in older homes. Water vapor in your home due to laundry, bathing, respiration, and cooking will converge on your windows as condensation, and can make your home feel clammy and uncomfortable. To avoid this:

Don't store or dry firewood in your home. An excessive supply of firewood is both a fire hazard and a source of unneeded moisture. Check the foundation of an unfinished basement for leaks, and call in a professional if you find any. The effects of freezing and thawing can make a small issue into a big problem very quickly. Reverse the direction of any ceiling fans so that they blow upwards, keeping air circulating and preventing all of the warm air from rising away from where its needed. Continue to use kitchen and bathroom fans to dissipate steam.

7. **Preventing Plumbing Problems**

If you know that certain pipes are susceptible to freezing, heat tape is an inexpensive preventative measure.

Make sure that everyone in the house knows where the main shut off is to contain a leak before it gets too bad.

Check all water faucets and shower valves for leaks.

Invest in a water heater blanket to help your water heater to keep hot water hot and available when you need it.

Drain outdoor faucets to prevent the damaging build up of ice.

Disconnect and store garden hoses.

8. Other Outside Checks

Clean, inspect and repair all gutters and downspouts. If possible, plan this chore for as late in the fall as possible to remove all debris. Install gutter guards to prevent build-up. Ensure that all gutters and downspouts are securely and properly attached to your home to withstand ice accumulation.

Repair any loose or missing roof shingles that could give ice and snow an in.

Check (or have a professional check) that flashings, metal plates, or other interruptions in the surface of the roof are intact and tight.

Cover any window AC units to prevent drafts and energy waste.

9. Indoor Ideas

Use daylight savings day as a reminder to check that all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home are in good working order.

If you don't have one, make an "emergency kit" that contains batteries, flashlight or candles, a battery operated radio, bottled water and non-perishable food items.

Stock up early on rock salt or other snow melting chemicals to keep your property safe for you and others such as mail carriers.

10. Little Things Can Make Big Differences

Only run dishwashers and washers/dryers that have full loads in them. Doing a full load is much more energy efficient than doing several small loads.

Turn off computers, printers, scanners and any other home office equipment when not in use. Consider using a laptop rather than PC if possible.

Close off rooms when not in use.

You don't have to be uncomfortable or inconvenienced by efforts to be energy efficient this winter – just be smart!