

❄ Time to Winterize! ❄

INTERIOR

It's time to prepare your home for freezing temperatures. Here are some suggestions that may apply to your home.

You might modify this checklist to customize for your home, and print it and keep a copy in Grand Lake, and one at your primary residence.

If you need names of people who can periodically check your home, give us a call at Mountain Lake Properties, 866-296-1949, or check out our "mini yellow pages" at <http://www.mountainlake.com/mlp/Yellow.htm>. Build for yourself a network of service providers upon whom you can rely.

Enjoy the Winter—knowing that you've taken precautions to ensure your home's safekeeping!

Doors and Windows and Crawlspace Vents

Turn off the power to the electric garage door opener. With the power off, it can't accidentally open. An open garage door can freeze pipes located in garage ceiling or walls.

Check that windows are closed and locked tight. Double hung windows are notorious for the top not closing tightly and going unnoticed because the window shade conceals the gap where it is open at the top. If you have difficulty closing a window, try pushing it in from the outside from an adjacent window opening. Slightly open windows create condensation on the wood work and sweating glass. In addition to the higher heating costs, the finish on the woodwork will suffer by being moist from condensation resulting from cold-air infiltration. It is good to leave an inch of space between your window blinds and the window sill so a little bit of warm air reaches the window to keep condensation from forming on the window's glass.

Check and lock all doors-- especially French-type doors that have one normally stationary and one operating side. Often times, these types of doors have a lever handle that you must pull up to engage the bolts into the head and the sill of the door jamb so that when you turn the locking bolt, it actually locks. If you don't lock the head and sill bolts, the thumb lock will turn like it's locking, but it won't actually lock the door from the outside. Test the handle to confirm that you've gotten the lock to lock.

If you have crawlspace vents, make sure they are closed and have some insulation over them. If you have access doors to crawler, make sure they are securely locked. In the spring, you will want to open these vents and remove the insulation so the crawlspace can breathe.

Water

Turn your water heater down or off.

Do the following only after consulting with your plumber to make sure you don't have any water-using appliances that need a supply of water to run—like a boiler or humidifier. If there is a way for your plumber to isolate any appliance that needs water from the rest of the house piping, then you should turn off the water to the rest of the home, but leave the water on to only the appliances that need it. An expansion tank might be all that is needed to accomplish this.

If you're on a well, turn off the breaker for the well pump. If you are on a community water system, turn off the main valve coming into the crawlspace.

By turning off your water, there will be minimal damage if a water heater or a washing machine or refrigerator hose breaks. Otherwise, water from these types of breaks could leak for weeks or months until discovered. The result could be a complete total remodel that is required.

Leave your cupboard doors open on cabinets that have water pipes in them, especially in cabinets that are located on exterior walls that will get cold during the winter. This would apply to many kitchen sinks, which are under windows on the outside walls. The heat from the home will warm the pipes if you leave the cabinet doors open.

Many homeowners have installed internet-connected water sensors and thermostats that will alert you if you have a water or heat failure while you're gone. Paying for internet year-round to monitor these sensors is like having insurance, and is well worth the cost.

Sewer

Furnace condensate, or any slow dribble of water such as leaky faucets and toilet flappers are the nemesis of sewers in the winter. To prevent damage, re-route the furnace condensate pipe into a large garbage can. A pump can be installed in the garbage can to pump a large quantity of water into the sewer in one large dose. This is much better than the constant dribble going into the sewer directly from the furnace or boiler. Ask your plumber for suggestions about this. A frozen sewer can lead to a disappointing shut down of a special family occasion during the winter holidays.

Heat and Thermostats

Check and set/balance them. Make sure they have fresh batteries (if they require them). Change batteries every time you change your smoke detectors. I recommend doing this in the Fall to prepare for the heating season; or if you have your windows washed, ask the washer to use his tall ladder to replace smoke detector batteries in higher locations.

Try to "balance" your thermostats. In some rooms, you may not want any heat. If so, only balance the thermostats where you want heat. To balance your thermostats, let the home cool down evenly by turning off the heat for a while in the fall. Once it gets down to a temperature you want to hold it at for the winter, go around and turn on your thermostats until you hear the "click". This will synchronize them so they are all set to the same temperature regardless of what the dial says.

Consider purchasing an internet-connected thermostat. It will contact you if your temperature goes down; and it allows you to turn up the heat in advance of your or your guest's arrival, and to turn down the heat if you or your guest forgot.

Furnaces and Boilers

If you have a high-efficiency furnace or boiler, it is very important to have it looked at and serviced each year. Delicate sensors can get clogged with debris that come in through the flue or that build up from the condensation. A clogged sensor can prevent the heater from firing. The flue gasses are acidic and cause corrosion that needs to be cleaned regularly by a technician. If this happens when you're away, the house will freeze. Rust can cause holes through which carbon monoxide can leak into your living space. Replace your filters once or twice a year.

Fill Propane Tank

Don't let your furnace run out of gas! During summer is the cheapest time to fill your tank. If you have propane, make sure you call for the truck before the driveway gets packed with snow, because the propane company may not deliver if your driveway is risky to drive on with their big trucks loaded with fuel.

Fireplace Dampers

Close the dampers on the fireplace so heat doesn't escape and so critters don't get into the home through the chimney. Turn off the gas if you've got a gas fireplace that you won't be using much over the winter. Ashes are helpful if left in the firebox, even though they smell. They serve as a reservoir to hold heat and energy which helps the fire burn hotter and more efficiently. A "cold" smoldering fire causes creosote to build in the chimney, which can catch fire eventually. A Chimney Sweep is a smart idea to remove any creosote build-up. Then, learn how to prevent creosote by burning "hot" fires.

Refrigerators and Freezers

Clean out your refrigerator of all liquids which can freeze and break the container that they are in. It's best to unplug your refrigerator. There is no reason for the refrigerator to cycle on/off all winter when you are not there to use it. Save the energy and wear and tear on the appliance. Leave the doors open so the air won't get stagnant. Put containers with liquids that might freeze and break the container into a warm room or in a sink that will catch the liquid if the container breaks.

Smoke Alarms

When you have the tall ladder out to wash your windows, change the batteries for the furnace thermostat, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. This way, they won't "chirp" all winter.

EXTERIOR

Clean Gutters

The slow melt dribbles water into the gutters during the late winter. Drainage can get blocked by dirty gutters. If it doesn't drain all the way out, the water freezes in the gutter overnight. This can weigh down the gutter, and it may also freeze/loosen the seams. Ensure the downspouts drain far away from the home.

Hot Tubs and Waterfalls

Disconnect and drain garden hoses so they can be dry and ready to use in the winter if necessary, i.e. temporary water or to fight a fire. Cover outdoor faucets with insulation.

Roof

Turn on the heat tapes if your roof and/or pipes and gutters have them. This is not usually necessary until late December when the days are the shortest and the nights are the longest.

During certain weather sequences, all roofs are prone to ice damming. The sequence often goes like this: There is already a good snow pack on the roof and we get a string of snows or one big snow. Then we get a very cold stretch where the heat is on high all day long. The heat escapes through the ceiling into the attic and then through the roof and starts melting the bottom layer of snow which is protected from the freezing ambient air by a thick blanket of insulation created by the deep/fresh snow. When the melt slowly dribbles down the roof, it freezes when it gets to the overhang, because the overhang is cold underneath. As the ice builds, the water above starts to get blocked from dripping off the roof and builds into a little puddle. The puddle sits on the roof for a long time, but eventually finds its way into the attic through nail or screw holes. Then, it percolates in through the ceiling or migrates along a rafter to the wall framing and drips down inside the surface of the wall. The water goes wherever it can.

If you see icicles forming on the underside of your eaves or poking out of random spots of your roof overhang or even from or on the exterior siding, it's time to shovel away that layer of snow 6' up from the edge. It is typically not necessary to shovel the entire roof. Make sure the snow from the roof is thrown as far away from the home as possible, so that it does not block water flow away from your home at the ground level. Make sure your contractor does not hit the heat tapes with the shovel. Usually, it is not even necessary for the ice to be removed from the roof. Just remove the snow from the top of the ice. If you try to chip away the ice, you can damage the shingles. By just removing the snow only, you are removing the insulation from the cold ambient air, which should stop any melting.

Exterior Drainage

Make sure the drainage is sloping away from your home. Some people add plywood or plastic next to the exterior of the home to keep the snow away from the siding and foundation. When melting snow drips off the roof in the spring, it sometimes has no place to go except toward the home, because the snow piled next to the home blocks

the drainage from going away from the home. So, make sure you have good, positive slope away from the foundation.

Seal horizontal log rails and deck boards

In the Spring, there are hours during daylight when the snow melts and saturates the wood. As soon as the sun goes down, there are many more hours when the saturated wood freezes solid. The freeze-thaw cycle of this saturated wood loosens the finish on your wood. If you put a new finish on the wood in the fall, the wood will not soak up as much moisture—the wood and its finish will last much longer.

Mark important things in the yard

You don't want to hit important things with the snow blower or the plow, so make sure you have them marked. Also, you will possibly need to locate sewer cleanouts and septic tank lids in case you have a freeze and need to thaw out a line during the snow covered months. In addition to marking them, you may also want to draw yourself a map to make it easy for someone else to find them. Keep enough space free of clutter where the snow contractor will be piling the plowed snow.

Ruff says, "Don't eat yellow snow!"