

Winter Home Safety

With its cold and often stormy weather, winter presents many safety challenges-both indoors and out. Being prepared and following simple safety tips can help you stay safe and warm this season.

Winterizing Your Home

- Keep portable space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including bedding, furniture, drapes, and clothing
- Place an easy-to-read thermometer in an indoor location where you will see it frequently. Check the temperature often during winter months, as your ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age.
- Remove screens from windows and install storm windows
- Make sure gutters are clear debris
- Insulate pipes in your home's crawl spaces and attic
- Store firewood at least 30 feet away from your home
- Clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper and space under the dryer
- Replace batteries of smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Check to ensure light bulbs are working around the house and make sure all walk ways are well lit
- Place a well secured door mat by the main entrance to catch snow and debris. Wipe up puddles immediately

Fire Safety

- Always keep a screen around an open flame
- Do not close the damper when ashes are hot
- When using alternative heat sources such as fireplace, woodstove, etc. always make sure you have proper ventilation. Keep curtains, towels and potholders away from hot surfaces.
- Have your chimney checked before the season for creosote buildup – and clean it if necessary
- Have a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors on hand and make sure they are working properly

Protecting Your Water Pipes

- Insulate any water lines
- Disconnect garden hoses and shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets
- Keep cabinet doors open to allow more heat to get to un-insulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall
- Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing
- Make sure heat is left on and set no lower than 55 degrees.

If Pipes Freeze:

- Make sure you know how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst
- Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent
- Never try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch

Outdoor Maintenance

- Keep all walkways clear of clutter, ice, and snow. Make sure high traffic areas are well lit

- When shoveling snow, always shovel in front if possible and do not toss over your shoulder or to the side
- Use rock salt or de-icing compounds to remove ice from steps, walkways, and sidewalks

Winterizing Your Vehicle

- Make sure your car is tuned up, check the level of antifreeze, check the battery, and check your tire tread or put on snow tires
- Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal and maintain at least a half tank of gas throughout the winter season
- Check to make sure your car is up to date with supplies in case of an emergency in winter weather:
 - ✓ Cell phone
 - ✓ Flashlight
 - ✓ Jumper cables
 - ✓ Sand or kitty litter (for traction)
 - ✓ Ice scraper
 - ✓ Small shovel
 - ✓ Blankets
 - ✓ Warning devices (flares or reflectors)