

# Fall Home Maintenance Checklist Before Winter in Utah

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Be prepared for the cold winter weather to avoid the risk of potentially severe property damage. There are some critical preventive maintenance tasks that homeowners should take to avoid severe issues that can require professional rehab by a professional fire or water damage restoration company. Below is a checklist of basic home maintenance tasks to complete each year before winter weather sets in. With your list completed by the time the temperatures start to plummet, you'll be ready to relax inside your safe and cozy home with the family and enjoy your favorite wintertime activities.

## Fall Home Maintenance Checklist

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To maintain a healthy and safe living environment during winter, use this handy checklist to ensure that all vulnerable areas of your home's interior and exterior are in winter-worthy condition:

### Smoke Alarms

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Each bedroom should have a smoke detector to help prevent a major house fire. Areas outside bedrooms should also have these life-saving smoke detection units on every level of a home. Follow a periodic maintenance schedule. A seasonal routine may work well for you. Clean your smoke detectors routinely to keep them free from dust or buildup from cooking grease, etc. Check the batteries on the schedule recommended by the manufacturer. Replace smoke detectors periodically as recommended by the manufacturer.

## Carbon Monoxide Detector

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Insufficient maintenance of carbon monoxide alarms can lead to deadly consequences of this odorless gas. Dirt buildup in and on the units can compromise their effectiveness in detecting the gas. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for routine maintenance and testing of your carbon monoxide detectors. Also, make sure your product features an alarm to alert you when an alarm is no longer functioning.

## Roof

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Winter weather takes its toll on a roof over time, so a top priority must be to examine your roof periodically for signs of deterioration that can potentially lead to leaks. Check shingles, seal along flashing, and around the chimney, vent pipes, HVAC equipment, skylights, etc., and inspect any screws on flashing, vent hoods, equipment mounts, etc., for the deterioration that puts the roof and your home at risk of damage from rain or ice/snow melt.

## Guttering

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With the falling leaves, it's the season to clean the gutters to keep them from clogging and potentially damaging your roof or exterior siding from rotting or insect infestations. Check and tighten any loose brackets. Inspect spaces behind gutters against the building exterior under the eaves, and check downspouts.

## Doors and Windows

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Repair damaged door or window frames. Replace worn caulking or weather stripping. Caulk around any doors, windows, and other openings in the building to seal up crevices and prevent drafts that can escalate heating costs. Add seasonal storm windows and doors as needed for your climate region to maximize protection against costly energy loss.

## HVAC System

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Change air filters. Clean heating and cooling ducts to help minimize risks for people in your home with respiratory issues. Check HVAC filters and replace them as needed. Have your equipment inspected at intervals suggested by your manufacturer (usually annually). Consider having a professional inspection of the system to help maintain the best performance and minimize the risk of minor issues leading to expensive major equipment repairs.

## Attic

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Attics are great air spaces that insulate homes from the loss of rising heat in winter. But, they're notorious (even in new homes) for simple undetected issues that can cause soaring energy bills, damage from water leaks, and diminished comfort from extreme heat loss.

Check to ensure attic insulation is not covering vent openings in eaves that can cause ice damming. Check ridge vents for a buildup of blown landscape debris. Install screens on attic vents to prohibit entry by rodents, birds, etc.

## **Fireplace**

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If your fireplace is used frequently during cold weather, you should have the chimney cleaned each year before the first use of the season. This is essential for helping prevent a chimney fire that can endanger your home and family. Check the flue to make sure it seals properly when closed. Consider having the chimney professionally inspected annually to ensure safety.

## **Plumbing**

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Every year in the U.S., millions of dollars in property damage and mold growth result from frozen plumbing pipes that burst and flood homes and commercial buildings. Inspect the entire length of each plumbing line in your home and their connection points to water faucets, and the dishwasher, ice maker, water heaters, etc. to ensure that each pipe is properly insulated against exposure to freezing temperatures and that fittings at connections appear to be secure. Make sure you know where your home's main water shut-off valve is located and how to turn off the water in an emergency.

## **Pest Control**

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Pests like rodents and roaches move indoors and infest millions of U.S. American homes each winter. They can contaminate furniture, bedding, food, children's play areas, etc. They can increase risks for people with respiratory conditions, and some can damage your home's structure. Seal all potential entry points, such as foundation or exterior cracks, crevices, or holes for utility lines, and eliminate causes of any standing water around the building's exterior.

## **Building Exterior**

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Carefully examine the exterior surfaces of your house, including the foundation, siding, edges of window frames, door seals, entry points for utility lines, and roof. Look for cracks, crevices, and other gaps or openings where water, air, or household pests can access your home, and seal them well. Shut off outside faucets. Insulate pipes that are exposed to outside temperatures with heat tape.

## **Energy Audit**

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You can perform your own DIY energy audit to locate areas of needed adjustments to reduce energy waste. For example, find and eliminate drafts around windows, doors, attic vents, plumbing, electrical line entries, and other areas vulnerable to air leaks. Use lower-watt light

bulbs, and unplug electrical devices while not in use. Consider having a professional audit for maximum energy savings.

## **Lawn and Garden**

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Perform lawn and garden winterization following the instructions from your local landscape professional to help ensure thriving trees, grass, and garden plants in the spring. Prune trees and shrubs, if needed, aerate and fertilize the soil to promote healthy grass growth, and apply lawn and garden insect treatments as recommended. Trim branches near power lines or your roof to avoid the risk of fire or structural damage from ice or heavy snow.

## **Winter's Coming – But Your Home is Ready!**

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Yes, a thorough DIY seasonal home inspection can be time-consuming. But, if you do a few items per week in the fall, you'll soon finish the list and can celebrate the achievement. Your family will be safer and more comfortable and your home will be better protected from the risk of damage due to the winter elements. You can enjoy the winter with greater peace of mind and in a healthier environment, and you can save substantially on energy costs.

## **For Home Restoration Services – Utah Flood Cleanup**

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If you need sewage cleanup, fire restoration, or water damage repair in your home due to a wintertime disaster, we will quickly return your property to its previous condition. We also provide mold abatement, which is often necessary when water damage occurs.

**For damage due to interior flooding from a roof leak, pipe burst, or other cause, call Utah Flood Cleanup at (801) 416-2666, or contact us here online to schedule a damage inspection.**

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