

FALL HOME MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Winterization Essentials: Protect Your Home Before Cold Strikes

Target Completion: September - November

Estimated Time: 18-25 hours total

Estimated Cost: \$600-\$1,000

SEPTEMBER: HEATING SYSTEM & INTERIOR PREP

HVAC - Heating System (CRITICAL PRIORITY)

- ☐ **Schedule professional furnace/heating inspection**
 - **Book NOW before October rush**
 - **Cost:** \$100-\$150
 - **Includes:** Burner cleaning, heat exchanger check, CO safety test, blower inspection
 - **Why critical:** CO poisoning kills 400+ annually, mostly from faulty furnaces
 - **Schedule by:** Mid-September
- ☐ **Replace HVAC filter**
 - New filter before heating season
 - Stock up on 6-month supply

- **Cost:** \$40-\$90 (bulk purchase)
- ☐ **Test heating system**
 - Turn on heat, verify it works
 - Listen for unusual sounds
 - Check all vents blow warm air
 - **Time:** 20 minutes
- ☐ **Clean heat vents and registers**
 - Vacuum inside vents
 - Wash vent covers
 - **Time:** 1-2 hours
- ☐ **Reverse ceiling fan direction**
 - Switch to clockwise (pulls air up, pushes warm air down)
 - **Time:** 5 minutes per fan

Fireplace & Chimney (If Applicable)

- ☐ **Schedule chimney inspection and cleaning**
 - **Must do annually** if used regularly
 - **Cost:** \$200-\$400
 - **Prevents:** Chimney fires (\$125M damage annually), CO poisoning
 - **Schedule by:** September (before heating season)
- ☐ **Test fireplace damper**
 - Should open and close smoothly
 - Seal tightly when closed
 - **Fix if:** Stuck or not sealing

- ☐ **Stock firewood if wood-burning**
 - Store off ground, covered, away from house
 - Season for 6+ months before burning
 - **Amount:** 1-3 cords for winter depending on use
- ☐ **Inspect gas fireplace**
 - Check pilot light
 - Test remote or switch
 - Clean glass doors
 - **Time:** 30 minutes

Carbon Monoxide & Safety

- ☐ **Test all smoke and CO detectors**
 - Press test button on each
 - **Replace batteries in ALL units**
 - **Replace unit if:** Over 10 years old, doesn't test properly
 - **Time:** 30 minutes | **Cost:** \$20-\$60
- ☐ **Inspect fire extinguishers**
 - Check pressure gauge (should be in green zone)
 - Note expiration date
 - Replace if needed
 - **Location:** Kitchen, garage, near fireplaces
 - **Cost:** \$30-\$50 each

OCTOBER: WEATHERIZATION & EXTERIOR PROTECTION

Gutters & Drainage (HIGH PRIORITY)

- ☐ **Clean gutters thoroughly (TWICE if trees)**
 - **First cleaning:** Early October
 - **Second cleaning:** Late October/Early November (after leaves fall)
 - Remove all debris completely
 - Flush downspouts with hose
 - **Time:** 2-4 hours each time | **Cost:** \$150-\$300 (pro) or \$0 (DIY)
 - **Why critical:** Clogged gutters = ice dams = \$3,000-\$10,000 damage
- ☐ **Inspect and repair gutters**
 - Look for: Sagging, rust, loose fasteners, leaks
 - **Secure loose sections** before winter weight
 - **Seal leaks** with gutter sealant
 - **Time:** 1-2 hours
- ☐ **Install gutter guards** (optional but recommended)
 - Reduces cleaning frequency
 - Prevents ice dams
 - **Cost:** \$5-\$10 per linear foot
- ☐ **Extend downspouts if needed**
 - Should direct water 6+ feet from foundation
 - Add extensions if water pools near foundation
 - **Cost:** \$10-\$30 per downspout
- ☐ **Check yard drainage**
 - Walk yard after rain
 - Note pooling or slow drainage

- Grade away from foundation if needed
- **Time:** 30 minutes observation

Roof Inspection

- ☐ **Professional roof inspection**
 - **Best timing:** Before winter, after leaves fall
 - **Cost:** \$200-\$400
 - **Critical if:** Roof over 10 years old, recent storms
 - **What they check:** Shingles, flashing, vents, overall condition
- ☐ **Visual inspection from ground**
 - Look for: Missing/damaged shingles, moss, debris
 - Check: Flashing around chimneys and vents
 - **Time:** 15 minutes
- ☐ **Remove leaves and debris from roof**
 - Especially in valleys where water flows
 - Prevents ice dams and rot
 - **Safety:** Hire pro if multi-story or steep roof
- ☐ **Check attic for leaks**
 - Look for: Water stains, daylight through boards, wet insulation
 - Best time: During or right after rain
 - **Time:** 20 minutes

Windows & Doors Weatherization

- ☐ **Install storm windows** (if removable)
 - Clean before installing

- Check seals and fit
 - **Time:** 2-3 hours
- ☐ **Apply weatherstripping**
 - Check all exterior doors
 - Replace worn or compressed strips
 - **Cost:** \$20-\$50 | **Saves:** 15% on heating costs
 - **Time:** 1-2 hours
- ☐ **Install door sweeps**
 - Bottom of all exterior doors
 - Should seal against threshold
 - **Cost:** \$10-\$20 per door
- ☐ **Caulk exterior windows**
 - Remove old, cracked caulk completely
 - Apply fresh bead around all frames
 - **Cost:** \$15-\$30 | **Time:** 2-3 hours
 - **Do when:** Temperature above 40°F for proper curing
- ☐ **Apply plastic film to drafty windows** (interior)
 - Temporary solution for single-pane windows
 - Creates insulating air gap
 - **Cost:** \$10-\$30 | **Time:** 1 hour

Trees & Landscaping

- ☐ **Trim tree branches away from house**
 - Maintain 6-10 foot clearance
 - Remove dead or weak branches

- **Priority:** Branches over roof, near power lines
 - **Cost:** \$200-\$800 (professional required for large/high branches)
 - **Why critical:** Prevents damage in ice/snow storms
 - ☐ **Rake and remove leaves**
 - Don't let thick layer smother grass
 - Compost or bag for removal
 - **Time:** 2-4 hours weekly during peak fall
 - ☐ **Aerate and overseed lawn** (cool-season grass)
 - Best time: September for cool-season grasses
 - **Cost:** \$60-\$150 (rent aerator) or \$200-\$500 (pro)
 - ☐ **Apply fall fertilizer**
 - Strengthens roots for winter
 - Different formula than spring (higher potassium)
 - **Time:** 1 hour | **Cost:** \$40-\$80
 - ☐ **Plant spring bulbs**
 - Must be in ground 6 weeks before hard freeze
 - **Time:** 2-4 hours | **Cost:** Varies
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NOVEMBER: FINAL WINTERIZATION

Irrigation System Winterization

- ☐ **Shut down sprinkler system** (MUST DO before freeze)
 - Turn off water supply
 - Drain all water from pipes

- Blow out lines with compressor (recommended)
 - **Cost:** \$50-\$150 (professional blow-out)
 - **Why critical:** Frozen pipes burst = \$500-\$2,000 repairs
- ☐ **Disconnect and store garden hoses**
 - Drain hoses completely
 - Store indoors or covered
 - **Time:** 20 minutes
- ☐ **Shut off exterior faucets**
 - Turn off interior shut-off valve
 - Open exterior faucet to drain
 - Leave open all winter
 - **Time:** 10 minutes per faucet
- ☐ **Insulate exterior faucets**
 - Use foam faucet covers
 - **Cost:** \$3-\$5 each | **Time:** 15 minutes

Outdoor Equipment & Furniture

- ☐ **Winterize lawn mower**
 - Run until gas tank empty OR add stabilizer
 - Change oil
 - Clean undercarriage
 - Store in dry location
 - **Time:** 30 minutes
- ☐ **Store or cover outdoor furniture**
 - Clean thoroughly first

- Cover or move to garage/shed
 - Store cushions indoors
 - **Time:** 1-2 hours
- ☐ **Winterize pool or spa**
 - Balance water chemistry
 - Lower water level
 - Add winterizing chemicals
 - Cover securely
 - **Cost:** \$100-\$300 (professional) or \$50-\$100 (DIY)
- ☐ **Drain and store power washer**
 - Run pump dry
 - Add antifreeze to pump
 - Store indoors
 - **Time:** 15 minutes

Plumbing Winterization

- ☐ **Insulate exposed pipes**
 - Focus: Crawlspaces, basements, exterior walls, attics
 - Use foam pipe insulation
 - **Cost:** \$20-\$50 | **Time:** 1-2 hours
 - **Prevents:** Frozen pipes (\$500+ repairs, \$5,000+ water damage)
- ☐ **Know location of main water shut-off**
 - Test that you can turn it off
 - Make sure everyone knows location
 - Clear access (not blocked by storage)

- **Time:** 5 minutes
- ☐ **Check sump pump operation**
 - Pour bucket of water into pit
 - Pump should activate
 - Consider battery backup for power outages
 - **Time:** 10 minutes
- ☐ **Service water heater**
 - Drain and flush to remove sediment
 - Check anode rod (replace if mostly corroded)
 - Test temperature/pressure relief valve
 - **Cost:** \$100-\$150 (professional)

Snow & Ice Preparation

- ☐ **Service snow blower**
 - Change oil
 - Replace spark plug
 - Check belts and auger
 - **Time:** 45 minutes | **Cost:** \$30-\$60
- ☐ **Stock ice melt and sand**
 - Pet-safe ice melt recommended
 - Sand for traction on slopes
 - **Cost:** \$20-\$60
- ☐ **Inspect snow shovels**
 - Replace if cracked or broken
 - Have backup shovel

- Consider ergonomic shovel (prevent injury)
 - **Cost:** \$20-\$50
- ☐ **Check generator** (if applicable)
 - Test run for 15 minutes
 - Change oil if needed
 - Stock fuel (with stabilizer)
 - **Time:** 30 minutes

Garage & Entry

- ☐ **Lubricate garage door**
 - Apply silicone spray to rollers, hinges, tracks
 - Test auto-reverse safety
 - **Time:** 20 minutes
- ☐ **Weatherize garage door**
 - Check bottom seal
 - Replace if cracked or stiff
 - **Cost:** \$20-\$50 | **Time:** 30 minutes
- ☐ **Create winter entry station**
 - Boot tray
 - Coat hooks
 - Salt/ice melt storage
 - **Cost:** \$30-\$100

INTERIOR FALL PREP

Windows & Insulation

- ☐ **Check window operation before winter**
 - Test that all windows close and lock properly
 - Fix now—won't want to in winter
 - **Time:** 30 minutes
- ☐ **Inspect attic insulation**
 - Should be R-38 to R-60 depending on climate
 - Add more if compressed or insufficient
 - Check for: Gaps, moisture damage, pest intrusion
 - **Cost:** \$1,000-\$2,500 (professional) if adding insulation
- ☐ **Close foundation vents** (if applicable)
 - Crawlspace vents should close for winter
 - **Time:** 15 minutes

Basement & Crawlspcace

- ☐ **Inspect for moisture issues**
 - Look for: Water stains, musty smell, efflorescence
 - Address before winter (worse when ground freezes)
 - **Time:** 20 minutes
- ☐ **Check sump pump**
 - Test operation
 - Clean intake screen
 - Verify discharge pipe drains away from foundation
 - **Time:** 15 minutes

Emergency Preparedness

- ☐ **Assemble winter emergency kit**
 - Flashlights, batteries (test them)
 - Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
 - First aid kit
 - Non-perishable food (3-day supply)
 - Water (1 gallon/person/day for 3 days)
 - Blankets
 - **Cost:** \$100-\$200
 - ☐ **Create home emergency plan**
 - Everyone knows: Main water shut-off, electrical panel, gas shut-off
 - Emergency contact list posted
 - Out-of-town contact designated
 - **Time:** 30 minutes
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FALL BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Professional Services:

- Furnace inspection: \$100-\$150
- Chimney cleaning: \$200-\$400
- Roof inspection: \$200-\$400
- Sprinkler winterization: \$50-\$150
- Gutter cleaning (x2): \$300-\$600

DIY Materials:

- Weatherstripping: \$20-\$50

- Caulk: \$15-\$30
- Pipe insulation: \$20-\$50
- HVAC filters (6-month supply): \$40-\$90
- Ice melt/sand: \$20-\$60

Total Fall Budget: \$600-\$1,000

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Early September:

- Schedule heating inspection
- Schedule chimney cleaning

Mid-September:

- Test heating system
- Begin leaf management

October:

- Clean gutters (first time)
- Weatherize windows/doors
- Tree trimming

Late October/Early November:

- Clean gutters (second time)
- Final leaf cleanup

Before First Freeze:

- Winterize irrigation (CRITICAL)
 - Disconnect hoses
 - Insulate pipes
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COST-SAVING TIPS

Bundle services:

- HVAC + duct cleaning
- Gutter cleaning + roof inspection
- Save 10-20% on combined services


DIY when safe:

- Weatherstripping
- Caulking
- Gutter cleaning (single story)
- Most interior tasks

Buy materials in bulk:

- HVAC filters (6-month supply)
 - Ice melt (before first snow)
 - Weatherstripping (do whole house)
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 **COMPLETION:** Check all boxes before first freeze!

 **NEVER FORGET:** MyHomePlatform reminds you of critical fall tasks 2 weeks before freeze date in your area → [Start Free]

 **NEXT:** Download Winter Maintenance Checklist in December

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Protecting your investment, one season at a time
www.myhomeplatform.com