**Top 10 Tips to Winterize Your Home**

**From**

**HouseMaster Guaranteed Home Inspections**

1. Disconnect, drain and store your garden hoses away for the winter. In very cold weather a garden hose left attached to an exterior hose bibb can cause the water pipe to freeze and split. This can cause thousands of dollars in water damage, especially in a finished basement.
2. Do not use salt for snow melt on exterior concrete, especially new concrete. Salt degrades concrete over time. The use of salt can spall and pit the surface of your driveways and sidewalks. After several years the concrete will need to be resurfaced or replaced at a cost of thousands of dollars.
3. Fall is time to have your furnace and humidifiers serviced. Humidifiers are high maintenance appliances that can plug with calcium deposits. Water connections can also drip on the furnace causing damage. Dampers to the humidifier must be opened for proper operation of the unit. Call you favorite Heating/Cooling contractor.
4. It’s time to “Fall-Back”! That means it’s time to replace all the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
5. Before you burn a wood fire in a fireplace or stove this Fall, have you chimney sweep and inspected for safety. Creosote from smoke builds up on the inside of chimneys and can lead to a flue fire. Chimneys should be cleaned and inspected at least every two years. Call your local Housemaster office at (314) 952-7007 to arrange a chimney sweep and inspection prior to the holidays.
6. Do not store your firewood in the garage or along a wall of your house. Store firewood at least 10 feet away from your home. Firewood can contain termites and other wood destroying insects that can cause extensive damage to your home.
7. As part of a professional chimney inspection, the exterior of the chimney must be thoroughly inspected too. The change of temperatures from summer to winter can cause mortar and caulk to split and crack. The chimney cap on masonry chimneys must also be checked. Mortar/concrete chimney caps routinely crack. These conditios can cause leaks at your chimney that may result in thousands of dollars of water damage to your ceilings and other interior finishes.
8. If your home has older, single pane windows, it’s time to install your storm windows. Storm windows can save a home owner hundreds or thousands of doollars in heating costs over the winter.
9. If your home has a whole house fan, install an insulated box over the fan in the attic. Hot air rises, but fan louvers provide little or no insulating value. By insulating the attic fan a home owner can save hundreds of dollars in heating costs over the winter. Remember to remove the insulation before using the fan in the Spring!
10. Before hanging your Christmas lights, check to see if your exterior outlets are GFCI (ground fault interrupter) style outlets. GFCI’s are commonly located in kitchens and bathrooms and many times have red and black buttons that reset the outlet after they has been tripped. Many older homes built prior to the early 90’s do not have GFCI outlets on the exterior of the home. GFCI outlets “interrupt” the flow of electricity when a fault or short is detected. This is very important in wet environments such as exterior Christmas lights to prevent being shocked!

Happy Holidays from everyone at HouseMaster Guaranteed Home Inspections!

For help or answers to any questions please call (314) 393-7007.