



Eight Tips for a Happy Fall & Winter in Your Home

Is your home ready for winter?

The colder months are quickly approaching, and if you're not prepared, your utility bill will reflect it. To help homeowners avoid winter woes, Joab Eades from HOPE Roofing and Construction, shares his top eight tips for keeping your home safe, warm and energy efficient during fall and winter.

Block the Leaks

Keeping your house warm and cozy requires a thorough inspection of your home's exterior and interior. On the outside, conduct a perimeter inspection; check all windows, outlets and faucets to make sure they are properly sealed. On the inside, check windows, doors, perimeter walls, fireplace damper, baseboards and electrical outlets. To seal cracks, use the appropriate caulk. To prevent leaks, use a window insulation kit.

Check Your Heating Systems

On your furnace, change the filters or install new filters each fall. Safety checks include the pilot light (should be blue) and checking for long lasting smells. Clean all heat registers for the best possible efficiency, and move furniture, curtains, and loose carpeting or rugs away from the registers so that the air can circulate freely and to avoid a fire hazard. Fireplace chimney and flues should be cleared of any creosote that has accumulated. To ensure your safety, hire a professional to inspect and confirm that your heating systems are operating properly.

Maximize Your Heating System

Get the most out of your heating system and save your dollars by using a setback thermostat, which allows you to heat your home when you are there and let the temperature drop a little when you are out. Also, "zone heating" helps you save money by only heating the areas of your home where you spend the most time.

Protect Your Hot Water

Significant savings on your utility bill can be accomplished by simply wrapping a water heater blanket around your water heater, insulating your water pipes (check crawlspaces, basements and garages) and considering the installation of a timer on all electric water heaters.

Get Your Ducts in a Row

Homes with central heating that have poorly connected or insulated ducts can lose up to 60 percent of their heated air. Check to make sure that pipes are not pinched (which impedes airflow), fix any gaps with metal-backed tape and vacuum once every few years to retain optimal performance.

Inspect Roof, Gutters & Downspouts

Winter weather in Washington means wind and rain. Your roof is the first line of defense in keeping your home safe and warm. To prepare for the colder months, you'll want to have plenty of attic insulation (a minimum of twelve inches). In addition, checking flashing and cleaning gutters and

installing leaf guards will help prevent water from entering your home. If climbing to the top of your home seems daunting, local roofing companies often offer a free inspection—a great way to ensure that your roof is ready for the winter.

Inspect Your Foundation

Cues on the inside such as cracks in the ceiling and doors and windows that won't shut properly can indicate a problem with the foundation. Conduct an inspection your home's foundation and siding for cracks. Also, check the foundation for proper drainage. To do this, place a two foot board flat against the foundation, spray with a hose to see if water runs away from the house. If problems are found, hire a professional to conduct a complete inspection and offer solutions.

Check All Alarms

Make sure that all alarms are functioning properly by testing the operation and batteries on smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors. Fire officials recommend replacing detectors every ten years.