

Ask the Expert: Ben Ladamirak's 12 Ways to Winterize your Home

By *Lindsey Shook* / 10/10/14 at 2:00 pm / **1 Comment**

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We've asked the expert opinion of Ben Ladamirak, of Teevan, on the 12 best ways to prepare your home for the Winter blues.

1. Service furnace (HVAC), and replace / clean filters: Staying comfortable and energy efficient during the winter starts with ensuring that your HVAC is running at optimal performance. Regular furnace and duct maintenance keeps the warm air going where you want it and avoids you paying to heat your utility spaces.
2. Inspect roof(s), including penetrations, and eaves: When it rains this winter (and it will!) nothing is more important than knowing your first line of defense is water-tight. While roofs

themselves rarely fail, edges, wall-to-roof junctions, and penetrations (chimneys, vents, etc) are all common areas for leaks to develop. Missing shingles or roof tiles are also a good indication of upcoming repairs as they protect the fragile roof membrane which becomes brittle when exposed to UV light.

3. Clean gutters and downspouts, replace/install screens: Perhaps the single most important regular maintenance your home requires, Gutter/Downspout cleaning provides all the water hitting your home a route for escape. Standing water in your gutters will almost ALWAYS find its way into your home.

4. Inspect chimneys, flues, spark arrestors, etc: Wow, you have a fireplace? Can we come over and sit by it? Seriously though, clean your chimney - this is a real fire hazard.

5. Inspect exterior (stucco, siding, shingles, paint etc.) Look for CHANGES. a crack that has existed since your childhood? Likely not a big deal. A crack that is bigger since last year? More serious. Also, the single BEST way to avoid needing to re-paint your home is to catch problems early so look for small open seams at window corners, above doorways, etc. Sealing these areas now, will save frustration, inconvenience and money later. Also look for peeling paint and do touch ups. This may not mean you can skip painting the house in the Spring but it can stop things from getting worse -saving prep time, labor and you got it -money!

6. Inspect windows, skylights, adjust / lubricate: This is the simplest preventive step and the

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most overlooked! Make sure your windows CLOSE AND LOCK. You would be amazed at how often simply locking a window will completely rectify a drafty/leaky window. The latch provides not only security, but also tightly compresses the window into the jamb, engaging the weather-stripping. Without doing this the weather-stripping isn't actually doing anything!

7. Inspect doors, etc. – adjust lubricate: Doors are most often made of multiple panels of wood and therefore as moisture and temperature vary, the individual panels will move, leading to cracks and open seams. Also make sure to check door bottoms for rot, and to make sure the threshold is securely installed without gaps for water and cool air to seep in at the edges. Properly sealed doors can save energy and money! Who doesn't love that?

8. Inspect /clean as needed – yard, surface drains, driveways, other low areas where water collects: Same as for your roof drains/gutters. Ensuring that water has an unobstructed route to leave your property is the first battle in the war against water intrusion. Especially be wary of areas that collect water and are tangent to the structure. Unless it's your swimming pool, in which case it sounds lovely, and we'll be over soon with our trunks.

9. Inspect / repair decks, patios, porches: This mostly refers to decks/patios OVER living spaces as often the surface material (tile/wood) is NOT acting as the waterproofing membrane. Regular deck/patio maintenance and sealing can help protect the fragile membrane beneath and bring light to any existing issues before they become more serious.

10. Inspect basement / crawl spaces / retaining walls for water seeps and leaks: Calcification/Chalky build-up on the interior of foundation walls is a good indicator of over exposure to water at the exterior. This can be relieved by installing ground surface and trench drains. Keeping basements and crawl spaces dry is paramount in minimizing the likelihood of mold growth becoming a problem.

11. Clean the Dish Washer Drain and Filter: What? You thought it was supposed to clean your dishes AND clean itself? No such luck. Why bother? This easy step can stop plumbing backups, prevent clogged pipes, make the dishwasher more efficient, and avoid buildup that causes nasty odors.

12. Clean Refrigerator Coils: It's likely the refrigerator has been pushed up against a wall and surrounded by cabinets all year long (or yikes - maybe longer). Dust build up creates heat, causes the coils to overload, hurts the cooling efficiency, increases energy use and is just plain dangerous. Dust accumulation is not only gross but it's a fire hazard. Bye-bye dust bunnies!

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