



SEASONAL CHECKLIST

WINTER

INSPECTING AND MAINTAINING YOUR HOME

Winter calls for a specific home maintenance routine to ensure a healthy and safe environment.

OUTSIDE



Clear the snow from basement accesses and emergency exits as well as from balconies and porches.	
Do not let snow or ice accumulate on temporary car shelters.	
Remove snow and frost that can stop heat pumps from working.	
Do the same to ensure the air intakes and exhaust vents of the following devices are clear: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air exchanger; • Dryer; • Kitchen range hood; • Bathroom fan(s). 	
At the same time, make sure nothing is preventing their exhaust vent flappers from keeping out air or water.	
If need be, spread sand or gravel with an environmentally safe de-icer to keep driveways and paths free of ice.	
Get a suitable electric extension cord to plug in your car's block heater.	
Keep a regular eye on the roof for icicles or ice dams, which can cause water infiltration. These normally indicate a lack of insulation or poor ventilation in the attic.	



Inspect the attic for these telltale signs of trouble:

- Frost;
- Rusty nail heads;
- Mildew under the roof decking/beams.

If need be, call in a specialist to determine the cause and take the necessary corrective actions.

Check to see whether the attic trap door is airtight; if necessary, install compressible weather stripping or removable sealant.

Monitor your ceilings and inside doors; unusual cracks or sticking could point to excessive accumulation of snow or ice on the roof.

Vacuum smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, because dust or spider webs could hamper their efficiency. Make sure they are in working order and that you have a replacement battery in the house at all times.

Check fire extinguishers; if necessary, have them refilled or replaced.

Check all locking devices on doors and windows that could serve as emergency exits.

Clean the bathroom exhaust fan grilles.

Inspect ceramic tile joints around the bath and shower as well as the seals around the edge of the bathtub.

As needed, apply grout sealant around the floor of the shower.

Test the stop valves on all plumbing fixtures.

Inspect the washing machine and dishwasher hose connections.

Clean and adjust cupboard drawers and doors.

If you find frequent condensation on glass surfaces, measure humidity levels using a hygrometer. In the winter, the hygrometer should not register above 45%, or 30% in extreme cold. If necessary, identify and control sources of indoor humidity, improve ventilation, and insulate around window frames.

Make sure air can circulate behind furniture and at the back of cupboards that are against outside walls, especially in the basement. Warm, damp areas encourage the development of mould and mildew. The appearance of black spots is a sure sign of this! If this happens, act quickly: determine the cause of the problem (water or cold air penetration, etc.), correct it, and clean the affected area.

Humidifiers and dehumidifiers (coils and pans) must be cleaned two or three times in the course of the winter.

If you do not have an air exchanger, open at least two windows for a few minutes each day: a well-aerated house will be less humid and easier to heat.

In very cold or windy weather, note any places where there is air penetration or uncomfortable areas. That way, you'll be able to take corrective action when mild weather returns.

Keep some de-icing fluid in your car for house locks—and vice-versa in the house.

Remove dust from behind and under the refrigerator and other household appliances.

Clean (and replace if necessary) the filters in your:

- kitchen range hood;
- air exchanger or heat recovery ventilator.

If you have a central vacuum cleaner, change the filter on a regular basis. Empty the bag or bin, and make sure the compartments remain airtight.

Check the solidity of railings and handrails.

If you have not done so already, locate the main water intake and tell family members where it is.

Pour water into the water trap of floor drains and other less-often-used plumbing equipment.

Check to see that the sump pump and its outflow pipe are working properly.

Make sure the sump pit has a cover (airtight, if possible).

Make sure there is a clear space of about 1 m (3 ft) in front of the distribution panel and the main electrical interrupter.



INSIDE



In especially cold weather, if any pipes are at risk of freezing, open a tap overnight and let a thin stream of water flow. Likewise, if you have pipes at the rear of a closet or cupboard, near an outside wall, open the doors to let warm room air in.

If you have an oil furnace, look at the burner flame. If the tip of the flame is not blue, call in a specialist.

Inspect your oil tank on a regular basis. Damp zones or seepage at its base, or a persistent oil smell, may point to an imminent leak.

In case of a minor oil leak, sprinkle plenty of bicarbonate of soda and sweep it up the next day. Call in a technician for repairs.

Check the air filters of a forced-air heating system carefully each month. Clean or replace them as needed.

If necessary, lubricate the fan motor and adjust the drive belt.

Reverse the rotation direction of ceiling fan blades (in winter, they should be turning to the right, i.e., clockwise, to draw warm air up and push it back down). Tighten the screws on the blades for quieter operation and greater solidity.

[Have a radon detection test done.](#)

In crawl spaces, keep the temperature at 10° to 15°C and make sure the air vents are well sealed.