



Sharon Harrison
Founder / President

Dear Homeowner,

Happy days are here again! Isn't fall in Texas simply the best?

So you've pulled your sweaters out of mothballs and found your mittens at the bottom of the coat closet. But what about your house -- is it prepared for the cold months ahead?

You'll be a lot less comfortable in the coming months if you haven't girded Home Sweet Home for Old Man Winter.

With the help of several experts, we've boiled down your autumn to-do list to 5 easy tips Home Tips for this season from Christopher Solomon, MSN Real Estate:

1. Block those leaks

One of the best ways to winterize your home is to simply block obvious leaks around your house, both inside and out, experts say. The average American home has leaks that amount to a nine-square-foot hole in the wall, according to EarthWorks Group. Then, buy door sweeps to close spaces under exterior doors, and caulk or apply tacky rope caulk to those drafty spots, says Danny Lipford, host of the nationally syndicated TV show "Today's Homeowner." Outlet gaskets can easily be installed in electrical outlets that share a home's outer walls, where cold air often enters. Outside, seal leaks with weather-resistant caulk. For brick areas, use masonry sealer, which will better stand up to freezing and thawing. "Even if it's a small crack, it's worth sealing up," Lipford says. "It also discourages any insects from entering your home."

2. Insulate yourself

"Another thing that does cost a little money -- but boy, you do get the money back quick -- is adding insulation to the existing insulation in the attic," says Lipford. "Regardless of the climate conditions you live in, in the (U.S.) you need a minimum of 12 inches of insulation in your attic. Don't clutter your brain with R-values or measuring tape, though. Here's Lipford's rule of thumb on whether you need to add insulation: "If you go into the attic and you can see the ceiling joists you know you don't have enough, because a ceiling joist is at most 10 or 11 inches."

3. Check the furnace

First; turn your furnace on now, to make sure it's even working, before the coldest weather descends. A strong, odd, short-lasting smell is natural when firing up the furnace in the autumn; simply open windows to dissipate it. But if the smell lasts a long time, shut down the furnace and call a professional. It's a good idea to have furnaces cleaned and tuned annually. Costs will often run about \$100-\$125. An inspector should do the following, among other things:

4. Get your ducts in a row

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a home with central heating can lose up to 60% of its heated air before that air reaches the vents if ductwork is not well-connected and insulated, or if it must travel through unheated spaces. That's a huge amount of wasted money, not to mention a chilly house. Ducts aren't always easy to see, but you can often find them exposed in the attic, the basement and crawlspaces. Repair





places where pipes are pinched, which impedes flow of heated air to the house, and fix gaps with a metal-backed tape (duct tape actually doesn't stand up to the job over time). Ducts also should be vacuumed once every few years, to clean out the abundant dust, animal hair and other gunk that can gather in them and cause respiratory problems. .

5. Reverse the fan

"Reversing your ceiling fan is a small tip that people don't often think of," says Lipford. By reversing its direction from the summer operation, the fan will push warm air downward and force it to recirculate, keeping you more comfortable. (Here's how you know the fan is ready for winter: As you look up, the blades should be turning clockwise, says Lipford.)

P.S. Don't forget to renew your home warranty! Check out the pricing of yearly and monthly plans. If you can't afford to buy the yearly plan, monthly rates are a great value and will help give you Peace of Mind when home repairs are needed.



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