

## *Get Ready for our Northern Winter!*

Utilize this helpful checklist from The Nancy Walker Team to prepare for a chilly Minnesota winter! Don't let the weather get you down-- these steps will keep you and your home cozy for the oncoming cold season.



### **Doors & Windows**

- ❖ Weather stripping prevents heat loss in your home-- check all your weather stripping around your doorframes and windows and replace if necessary.
- ❖ Screen doors must be replaced with storm doors, and window screens must be replaced with storm windows.
- ❖ Check wooden window frames for any evidence of decay or rot. If there are signs of damage, repair or replace.
- ❖ Check your doors and windows for drafts. Caulk in and outside where drafting occurs to keep indoor heating from escaping.
- ❖ Check your windows for breakage, gaps, or cracks. If needed, repair or replace.



## Lawn, Garden, and Deck

- ❖ Icy overgrown branches and electrical wires around the house can cause serious issues- trim back to prevent power problems and property damage.
- ❖ Aerate your lawn, reseed, and use a winterizing fertilizer for deep-root growth when spring comes around.
- ❖ Foundational problems may occur if rain and snow is not drained away from the house. The area around the exterior of your home-- the dirt grade-- must slope away from your home. You may add additional dirt to low areas as needed.
- ❖ Patio furniture must be clean and dry. A heavy tarp may be used for covering, or store your furniture inside a garage or shed to protect it from weather damage.
- ❖ Soil from planters must be cleaned. Pots made of fragile materials such as clay should be brought indoors. Terra cotta pots can be damaged during the winter, so lay them down on their sides in a wood carton.
- ❖ Any attached hoses must be stored for the winter to prevent cracking, and to prolong their life. Outside faucets may be wrapped and covered to prevent water damage.
- ❖ Exterior faucets must be shut off. Water must be drained from outdoor pipes, valves, and sprinklers to protect against bursting pipes.
- ❖ Decks may be vulnerable to decay, splintering, and insect damage-- inspect for these symptoms and treat to prevent further damage over the winter.



## Machinery and Tools

- ❖ All seasonal tools must be brought indoors and sprayed with a coating of rust-preventing lightweight oil.
- ❖ Clean mud, leaves, grass, and debris off your lawn mower to weatherize it.
- ❖ Your snow blower and shovels are winter essentials, so keep them near the front of the garage for easy access. Your snow blower can be prepared for the first snowfall with a change of oil and a replaced spark plug.
- ❖ Keep ice melt or sand handy for to slip-proof your walkways, steps, and the driveway.



### **Heating, Air Conditioning, and Ventilating**

- ❖ Cracks and voids can cause a fire hazard in the firebox and flue system-- check for these, and clean off any soot or creosote.
- ❖ Check for drafts near your fireplace. If you experience cold even with the damper closed, your damper may be worn, rusted, or warped. A Chimney Balloon may be installed into the flue for a tight air seal.
- ❖ For maximum efficiency and better indoor air quality, clean or replace the air filter in your furnace.
- ❖ Replace your evaporator pad and clean the whole house humidifier.
- ❖ Heating efficiency may be increased by bleeding valves on hot-water radiators, thereby releasing trapped air.
- ❖ Make sure your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are functional!
- ❖ Air conditioners may be removed from windows or covered with insulated liners, preventing drafts.
- ❖ An older thermostat may hike your heating costs-- replace with a programmable unit to save money during the cold season.
- ❖ Switch fans to the reverse (or clockwise) position, blowing warm air down to the floor, enhancing comfort and energy efficiency.
- ❖ To remove sediment, flush a hot water heater tank. Check the pressure relief valve to make sure it is functional.
- ❖ Sealant may be used to plug up any leaks in exposed ducts in the basement, attic, and crawl spaces.



### Roof, Drains, and Gutters

- ❖ Damaged, warped, or missing shingles may cause leaks-- check and replace as necessary.
- ❖ Look out for deteriorated flashing at the walls, chimney, and skylights around vent pipes. Joints where water could penetrate may be sealed using roofing cement and a caulking gun.
- ❖ Make sure gutters and downspouts have proper fastening. If they are loose or sagging, re-secure. Snow and ice can pull gutters off the house under their weight.
- ❖ Clean debris out of the gutters. Ensure that downspouts extend away from the house by 5 feet at least, preventing water damage from melting snow and flooding of the foundation.
- ❖ To prevent blockages, clean debris and leaves out from courtyard and pool storm drains.
- ❖ Make sure all openings and vents are covered to prevent birds, rodents, and insects from coming inside to nest.



All done? Excellent! You and your home are absolutely prepared for the coming winter.