



Autumn Maintenance For Your Home

As the leaves change and the days get shorter, take the time this autumn to prepare for the oncoming cold weather. Ready the furnace for the months of work it will have ahead, and clean out the fireplace. Test them both to ensure they'll be working when you need the heat. Don't wait until it's snowing to clear out your gutters. With upkeep in the fall, you'll have peace of mind in the winter and more time to hibernate.

Inside The House

Heating System Checkup

Be sure to change the air filter in your furnace and check its efficiency before the cold weather begins. Call in an HVAC contractor to test the heating output and give the system a tune-up. This technician can also check for and correct possibly hazardous carbon monoxide levels generated by your heating system. Stock up on several air filters for the winter, and change them every month. If you don't have a programmable thermostat, purchase one for the system to help lower your energy costs.

After your furnace has been tuned up to its maximum efficiency, take a moment to inspect your heating ducts and vents. Dust them off and clear away anything that may have gotten into them over the summer. Then check your windows for any leaks that may compromise your heating efficiency. If you feel cold air coming in, purchase a plastic sealing kit from the hardware store and place the plastic around the window to keep the heat from escaping. Be sure to check your doors as well, and fix their weather-stripping if needed.

Check The Fireplace And Chimney

Most chimney sweeps recommend an annual sweeping, but depending on how often you use the fireplace, you might be able to wait on a full sweep. But if you will be using the fireplace often, call a chimney sweep for an inspection. For further information, read the [Chimney and Woodburning Fireplace Safety guide](#). Hopefully you will have your older, seasoned firewood now ready for use after sitting for the spring and summer. It's recommended to keep the firewood at least 30 feet from the house and covered. Seasoned wood is best for fires, as it burns cleaner and longer.

Review Home Fire Safety

The introduction of the heating season brings new potential for fire hazards, so take a moment to review fire safety in your home. Check and replace fire extinguishers if necessary, and change the batteries in your smoke detectors. Also go over the [home fire evacuation plan](#) with your family.

Outside The House

The Gutters

It's best to inspect and clean the gutters a few times during the fall, especially if there are many leafy trees around your house. If gutters remain clogged, water will spill over them and onto the ground next to the foundation, which may cause damage to the foundation. Gutters and downspouts should be kept clean and should direct water away from the foundation, as well as from walkways and driveways, so that they do not become slippery or icy.

Yard Maintenance

The orange, yellow, and brown colors of the autumn leaves don't look as nice on the ground as they do on the trees. Rake the leaves into piles and scoop them into yard waste bags. Most areas have ordinances about burning leaves, so check with your local area government first. When sweeping the leaves off your patio, don't forget to clean, pack up, and store any patio furniture for the winter. Disconnect garden hoses and, if practical, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the section of pipe just inside the house.

In The Garage

It is recommended that you empty out unused fuel from any gas-powered equipment stored in the garage, such as a lawnmower, because sediment can build up and clog the fuel lines. Store gasoline in tanks out of children's reach and have it ready for use in your snowblower or emergency generator, if need be.

Test Your Emergency Generator

It's a good idea to have an [emergency generator](#) if you live in an area that sees a lot of ice storms, as these are a major cause of blackouts during the winter. So if you have one, haul it out and give it a test run to see if it is in good working order. Make sure you never run the generator in any enclosed space – like your garage – as it will present a carbon monoxide hazard.

For More Information: <http://learningcenter.statefarm.com/residence/maintenance/fall-maintenance-tips-for-your-home/>