



**With winter rapidly approaching and the feel of snowflakes in the air, what can you do to prepare your home for the potentially harsh Wisconsin winter?**

Freezing pipes and ice dams are just a couple of the issues that can arise from fluctuating temperatures and humidity levels. This article will cover some tips and ideas on what you can do to protect your home from sustaining damage this season.

➤ **Clean Gutters and Downspouts** — Clearing the leaves and debris out of your gutters and making sure your gutters drain properly is a must! This minor project is the first step in ensuring that your home is protected from ice dams. If water cannot flow through the gutters and away from your home, it can freeze there, building layer upon layer of ice pushing up under your shingles and creating water damage on the interior of your home. One way to avoid this bi-annual task is to install gutter guards to prevent debris all year long.

➤ **Clean Dryer Vent and Hose** — This should be done a minimum of once a year. Don't just clean the lint from the outside of the vent, make sure to also clean out or replace the hose between the dryer and the exterior. There are 15,500 house fires annually in the United States each year, cleaning out the hose and vents can go a long way in preventing this.

➤ **Clean Leaves and Debris From Window Wells** — This is important so that water doesn't build up and freeze and cause damage to the interior of your building.

➤ **Put Away Yard Toys and Furniture for the Season** — This will keep them from being blown into the property causing damage. Additionally, your lawn furniture and toys will last longer if they are stored away from the harsh winter.

➤ **Disconnect Hoses and Turn Off Water Supply to the Outside Spigot** — This is important so your supply line does not freeze and rupture, creating water damage to your property.

➤ **Prepare Your Car for Winter** — Create a winter supply kit that includes blankets, food, water, a flashlight, a shovel and kitty litter or salt. This could potentially save your life if you should happen to be involved in an accident or get lost and must wait for help to come.

➤ **Check for Drafts at Windows and Doors and Seal if Leakage is Detected** — Eliminating drafts will help keep heating costs lower and keep the temperature in the home more consistent.

➤ **Change Furnace Filter** — This should be done at least twice a year. Usually, a good time is when you set your clocks back. Test your smoke detectors, change your clocks and put in new furnace filters.

➤ **Attic Insulation** — Just check to make sure your insulation has not compacted over the last year. The type of insulation (batts or blown) will determine what depth your insulation should be at. Make sure vents are clear and functioning to ensure proper airflow through your attic space as well.



➤ **Proper Humidification** — This is important as well. In the summer we look to dehumidify and during the winter you may need to add humidity to the property to make sure it doesn't get too dry and cause cracking in your wood building materials.

➤ **Flush, Rinse and Refill Your Water Heater** — This should be done once a year to remove sediment build up in your water heater.

➤ **Swap Your Screens for Storm Windows** — This will help cut down on drafts and make your windows more energy-efficient throughout the season.

*Preparing your home for winter takes a bit of effort, but in the long run, will benefit you and your home. If you are unable or just don't have the time to do this work, contact a local handyman or contractor to assist you in the process!*