

Winterizing Your Home Exterior: A Checklist

In Texas, no one waits for the temperature to drop very low before breaking out their coats and scarves, but as the truly cold weather starts to roll in, wrapping your house up for the winter is just as important as wrapping up yourself. Neglecting exterior home winter maintenance can lead to costly repairs, long waiting lists, and possible emergencies at the time of year when most can least afford them; and no one wants to deal with a flooded basement on Christmas Eve. So here is your checklist for making the outside of your home winter-proof so that you can enjoy winter the way it's supposed to be enjoyed; inside, warm, and safe.

Let's start at the top of the house. Head up to your roof to inspect for any damage. Missing shingles and other damage should be immediately repaired in order to avoid possible leaks during winter storms. While you're up there, you should go ahead and clean your gutters so that you can avoid icicles and ice dams throughout the season. Detritus built up in gutters can cause a back-up of water that will freeze and could ultimately damage your gutters or roof if not taken care of quickly. It's best to just clear your gutters before it gets cold and stormy than to have to go out into the cold later and knock down dangerous ice dams afterwards. While you are focused on the top of your home, if there are any exposed pipes in the attic, wrap some insulation around them to protect them from freezing. Top of the house: done.

Now that you're back on the ground, give your house a once around and search all of the windows and doors for drafts. There's nothing inherently wrong with cold weather, but you shouldn't have to be cold inside your own house, and gaps between doors, windows and your walls will lead to that. Any gaps wider than a nickel should be filled with caulk, and any old window putty should be replaced as soon as possible to prevent any heat loss during those frigid winter nights. Home exterior: complete. Now onto the garden.

Winterizing your pipes and outdoor spigots is essential to ensuring that you don't end up with broken pipes and an expensive emergency call to a plumber. Any exposed water pipes outside should be insulated to protect them from freezing during cold nights, and the same should be done for any pipes in basements or attics. Meanwhile, outdoor spigots should be drained by shutting off the water valve in your home long enough for all of the water to be removed from the pipe, and the same should be done for all water hoses. If you have an underground irrigation system, that too should be drained to avoid frozen pipes throughout the winter.

A few more important things you can do to make your home winter ready is to have your chimney cleaned before its first winter use to prevent any unwanted fires. Experts recommend that you cover your AC with something sturdy to protect it from damage from falling objects like tree limbs or ice dams. Last, but not least, trim any tree limbs that look dead or have grown too close to your house. In the event of an ice or snow storm—they do occasionally happen in Texas—weaker tree limbs can become weighed down by snow or ice and fall, damaging whatever is in their path. Since it's better for the overall health of the tree to remove these limbs anyway, removing them while you're winterizing your home's exterior is a good idea, as it solves two potential issues before they ever have a chance to become a serious problem.

Even if you live in parts of the country with traditionally mild winters, performing winter exterior maintenance will only benefit your home in the end, and with this handy checklist, the maintenance will be faster and easier than ever. For more information on winterizing your home, or for expert advice on how to perform these tasks, contact Liberty Builders, we're always happy to help you with your home maintenance needs.