

MIKE'S Tool Box

Mike Forner's Home Services:

**MY MISSION IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOU
AND YOUR FAMILY BY PROVIDING PROMPT,
COMPREHENSIVE, EXPERT HOME MAINTENANCE AND
REPAIRS. I WILL TREAT YOUR HOME AS IF IT WERE MY OWN!**



How To Prepare Your Home For Severe Winter Weather

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.

We've boiled down your winter weather prep list to 10 easy tips:

1. Clean those gutters:

Once the leaves fall, remove them and other debris from your home's gutters so that winter's rain and melting snow can drain. Clogged drains will contribute to the formation of ice dams, in which water backs up, freezes and causes water to seep into the house.

As you're hosing out your gutters, look for leaks and misaligned pipes. Also, make sure the downspouts are carrying water away from the house's foundation, where it could cause flooding or other water damage. The rule of thumb is that water should be at least 10 feet away from the house.

2. 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. The average American home has leaks that amount to a nine-square-foot hole in the wall. Even if it's a small crack, it's worth sealing up. It also discourages any insects from entering your home.

3. 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. Regardless of the climate conditions you live in, in the U.S. you need a minimum of 12 inches of insulation in your attic.

4. 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 the odor. 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, checked and tuned annually. Throughout the winter you should change the furnace filters regularly (check them monthly). A dirty filter impedes airflow, reduces efficiency and could even cause a fire in an extreme case.

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*Stay tuned for next month's front-page article on tips to avoid
freezing pipes!*



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Upcoming Events In October That Might Interest You...



*Hallowe'en Nights in Greenfield Village.

October 10-12, 17-19 & 24-26, 2014.

Frightfully fun for the whole family! Stroll down streets and alleys haunted by over 1,000 carved jack-o'-lanterns and lavishly costumed characters during America's most spooktacular Halloween event.

Time slots are every ½ hour 6:30pm-9pm
Fridays & Saturdays. Sundays 6:30pm-8pm.

You can buy your tickets at
<http://www.thehenryford.org/events/halloweenEvent.aspx>



* Fleetwood Mac will be playing at The Palace of Auburn Hills at 8pm on Wednesday, October 22nd.

You can buy your tickets at stubhub.com



* Halloween on Friday, October 31st.



* University of Michigan Home Football Schedule for October 2014:

When: 10/11/2014

Who: Penn State

Where: Michigan Stadium, Ann Arbor, MI
What Time: 7:00pm ET

How To Prepare Your Home For Severe Winter Weather Continued...



5. 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 should also 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 for family members & pets.

6. Face your windows:

Now, of course, is the time to take down the window screens and put up storm windows, which provide an extra layer of protection and warmth for the home. Storm windows are particularly helpful if you have old, single-pane glass windows. But if you don't have storm windows, and your windows are leaky or drafty, they could be updated to a more energy efficient window.

7. Don't forget the chimney:

Don't put off your chimney needs before using your fireplace. A common myth is that a chimney needs to be swept every year. Not true in most cases. But a chimney should at least be inspected before use each year. Ask for a Level 1 inspection, in which the professional examines the readily accessible portions of the chimney. Most certified chimney sweeps include a Level 1 service with a sweep.

Another tip: Buy a protective cap for your chimney, with a screen. It's probably the single easiest protection because it keeps out foreign objects (birds, tennis balls) as well as rain that can mix with the ash and eat away at the fireplace's walls. Buy based on durability, not appearance.

One other reminder: To keep out cold air, fireplace owners should keep their chimney's damper closed when the fireplace isn't in use. And for the same reason, woodstove owners should have glass doors on their stoves, and keep them closed when the stove isn't in use.

8. Reverse that fan:

Reversing your ceiling fan is a small tip that people don't often think of. 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).

9. Wrap those pipes:

A burst pipe caused by a winter freeze is a nightmare. Prevent it before Jack Frost sets his grip: Before freezing nights hit, make certain that the water to your hose bibs is shut off inside your house (via a turnoff valve), and that the lines are drained. Also, remove hoses that are attached to those hose bibs.

Next, go looking for other pipes that aren't insulated, or that pass through unheated spaces -- pipes that run through crawlspaces, basements or garages. Wrap them with pre-molded foam rubber sleeves or fiberglass insulation. If you're really worried about a pipe freezing, you can first wrap it with heating tape, which is basically an electrical cord that emits heat.

10. Finally, check those alarms:

This is a great time to check the operation -- and change the batteries -- on your home's smoke detectors. Detectors should be replaced every 10 years, fire officials say. Test them -- older ones in particular -- with a small bit of actual smoke, and not just by pressing the "test" button. Check to see that your fire extinguisher is still where it should be, and still works.

Also, invest in a carbon-monoxide detector; every home should have at least one mounted near your gas fired furnace & hot water heater.

7 Home Safety Tips To Prevent Halloween Accidents



Halloween is a night for costumes, spooky thrills, trick-or-treating, candy and, of course, fun. No one wants their happy Halloween to be marred by an accident. Everything from Jack O' Lantern candles to poorly lit walkways can pose a safety problem for trick-or-treaters and homeowners. But, not to worry — there are several precautions you can take before those zombies and ballerinas start knocking on your door.

Whether you are transforming your home into a haunted house or simply handing out candy to your neighborhood ghouls and goblins, a quick safety check will help ensure a happy night of haunting.

Keep Halloween scary... in a good way! Follow these seven tips for Halloween safety.

No. 1: Trick-or-treat safely. Halloween safety for kids starts at home. Remind trick-or-treaters to walk, not run, between houses and stick to well lit driveways and sidewalks.

No. 2: Light up the night. Lit candles or luminaries may add a spooky glow to your home, but they also pose a serious fire hazard. Trick-or-treaters can easily knock over the lit candles lining your front walk, injuring themselves and potentially starting a fire. Instead of real candles, opt for LED tea lights or wind a string of orange lights around your front porch. If you have a long driveway or walkway, turn on your regular outdoor lights, as well. Any lights used outside should be grounded and rated "water-resistant/UL approved for outdoor use."

No. 3: Clear a path. Illuminate a clear path from your driveway to the front door. Repair loose porch railings and uneven walkway stones that pose a safety threat to young trick-or-treaters. If you add spooky yard decorations like tombstones, fake cobwebs or mummies, be sure that these decorations do not obstruct any pathways.

No. 4: Clean up your yard. Fueled by candy and adrenaline, young trick-or-treaters often race from house to house, cutting through yards and alleyways. Anticipate potential hazards: Rake leaves, remove dead branches, trim hedges and fill in large holes. Store bikes, potted plants, gardening tools and hoses out of the yard and a safe distance from any walkways.

No. 5: Confine pets. The constant excitement of young children ringing the doorbell is simply too much for many pets. Scared cats can dart out the front door, knocking over carved pumpkins and candles. Dogs that mistake trick-or-treaters for intruders may inadvertently attack a young child. Avoid a Halloween pet mishap by keeping Fluffy and Fido away from the excitement.

No. 6: Check your homeowner's coverage. Opening your home up to visitors, even if they are just trick-or-treaters on the front porch, can expose you to potential insurance claims and lawsuits. Check with your insurance agent to make sure your house is adequately covered.

No. 7: Practice indoor fire safety. Hosting a Halloween party for adults? Check your smoke alarms; a working smoke detector is the best way to reduce the risk of someone being injured in a fire. Keep decorations like crepe paper away from carved pumpkins and open flames.



Macaroni Alfredo with Pumpkin and Kale Recipe

Ingredients:

- 6 ounces dried whole grain elbow macaroni
- 6 cups torn fresh kale
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons sliced green onion (1)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 12 ounce can evaporated fat-free milk
- 3/4 cup canned pumpkin
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh sage
- 1/2 cup finely shredded Parmesan cheese (2 ounces)
- Thinly sliced green onions (optional)

Directions:

1. Cook pasta according to package directions, adding kale for the last 30 seconds of cooking; drain. Return pasta mixture to pan; cover and keep warm.
2. Meanwhile, for sauce, in a large skillet combine wine, 2 tablespoons green onion, and garlic. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, about 5 minutes or until liquid is nearly evaporated. Stir in evaporated milk. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 6 minutes. Whisk in pumpkin and sage.
3. Add sauce and 1/4 cup of the cheese to pasta mixture; toss gently to coat. Divide pasta mixture among warm shallow serving bowls. Top with the remaining 1/4 cup cheese and, if desired, additional green onions.

Wise Home Owner Tip: 10 Secrets To Making Your Home Look Great



1. Just Add Water (Sort of): The difference between the home you've spent so much effort redoing and those you've torn from magazines (beyond a seemingly limitless budget) might be a well-placed little bouquet. We didn't believe it either, until we were told to place a finger over the vases of flowers in photos. Poof! The room suddenly feels less pulled-together.

2. Conduct a Brown Inventory: Chances are, there's one color that's quietly overtaking your living room, because it goes with any color scheme and hides stains, but too much of it could be making the place look dated and, well, lair-like.

3. Create the Illusion of Organization: Lotion, soap, tooth floss—there are certain items you use too often to hide away. Use trays in your bathroom to contain items and make them feel less cluttered. Plus, you can put your prettiest bottles in the front and add in a plant to make it seem more thought-through.

4. Try a No-Fail Pillow Combination: All too often, we fall victim to the adorable throw pillow trap and buy a bunch in the same size. That's why the sofa looks overwhelmed with cushions, instead of styled. Really, you only need three: one 20-inch by 20-inch, one 16-inch by 16-inch, and one 12-inch by 16-inch.

5. Find Your One Missing Color: Some people are drawn to cool tones, others to warm tones, but what most of us don't realize is how a pop of the opposite—say a few coral accents in a room of blues and white—can enhance our favorite shades.

6. Give Your Contemporary Sofa a friend: Modern homes tend to have a lot of clean lines—which can also mean more than a few hard edges. To soften this look and make the room appear more inviting, add a throw or a sheepskin rug. It can be draped on a chair or sofa like a throw would be, but it works anywhere because it adds texture without adding pattern, and warmth without color.

7. Balance Out the Big, Comfy Couch: Overstuffed sofas have gone the way of sponge-painted walls, but they're not as easy to get rid of. If you aren't ready to invest in a new sofa, take a look at the other items in your living room. You need just a few big pieces to even it out. A coffee table in the same scale and a few sleek, modern pieces—maybe a side table or a floor lamp—can freshen things up. Just beware of knick-knacks: Little accessories will only make this sofa seem bigger, and it'll make the items seem tiny and cluttered.

8. Rethink Your Trios: We've all heard how important it is to decorate in odd numbers, but it's not just the quantities of threes (or fives) that make things more pleasing to the eye. You never want three of the same thing. Vary the texture, size and, sometimes, color, so the overall effect is collected but not matchy-matchy.

9. Tame the Rustic Pieces: As the country style heads to that great pasture of once-popular designs, you don't have to give up the farm table you fought for at the flea market. The fastest way to update a table is to change the two chairs at each end of the table, whether that's replacing them with something lighter, or just reupholstering them in a modern fabric, like a thick stripe or zebra print.

10. Burn Your Colorful Candles: Variety usually makes a room more interesting, but when it comes to candles, there's one color stylists almost always like to use: white. If you love a mix of candles, we suggest using different heights and widths.



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Did You Know...

That you can use Clorox Cleanup with Bleach to preserve your jack-o-lantern? Preserving your pumpkin with Clorox Cleanup will help keep mold and squirrels away and will allow it to last approximately twice as long as using no preservative.

Uplifting Quote of The Month

"Listen! The wind is rising, and the air is wild with leaves, we have had our summer evenings, now for October eves!"

~Humbert Wolfe, Poet 1885 - 1940

Joke Of The Month

Two men were walking home after a party and decided to take a shortcut through the cemetery just for laughs.

Right in the middle of the cemetery they were startled by a tap-tap-tapping noise coming from the misty shadows.

Trembling with fear, they found an old man with a hammer and chisel, chipping away at one of the headstones.

"Holy cow, Mister," one of them said after catching his breath, "You scared us half to death -- we thought you were a ghost! What are you doing working here so late at night?"

"Those fools!" the old man grumbled. "They misspelled my name!"