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## HOME LIVING TIPS • AUTOMOTIVE TIPS • SAFETY TIPS

A Get Ready for Winter Guide



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### WINTER 🖗 \* Ballinto Winter roof maintenance: your attic's attic should set off alarm \*Ventilation. hidden secrets

(NewsUSA) - What homeowner wants to brave the winter elements to check on the health of his roof? And yet, given the crucial role roofs play in determining a house's efficiency—yes, that means utility bills-most people think they have no choice but to go mano a mano with all that snow and ice. Turns out most people are wrong. You could just check your attic instead.

"Roofs create an insulated barrier that helps trap heat inside," says Jason Joplin, program manager of the Center for the Advancement of Roofing Excellence, which is championed by GAF, North America's largest roofing manufacturer. "And since most attic spaces are located right below them, it's a convenient spot to see potential problem areas and damage without being subjected to falls and injury."

Here are some tips on what to look for:

\*Animal damage. The telltale signs that birds, bats, squirrels and raccoons have found refuge in your

bells, given the havoc they can wreak. So if you do spot anything suspicious including nests, droppings and gnawed wood, wires or insulation—call a pest professional immediately.

\*Leaks. As sure as the TSA will keep hassling grandmothers, it will soon storm. And when it does, shine a flashlight up in the attic in search of not just dripping water and condensation, but also water stains on the ceiling, walls and floor. Those are sure indications that H2O is unfortunately finding its way under your roof's shingles or behind its flashings.

"The attic is like the lungs of the house," says Joplin. "It must be able to breathe in order to function properly." Ergo, if your vents are stuffed with debris, they need to be cleared.

\*Structure. Now that you're in the attic, take a look up. Are sections of the roof sagging? If so, that signals potential structural weakness requiring professional repair. Of course, for those who insist on venturing outside in the cold, here's a final tip to file under the category of Why Didn't I Think Of That Myself? You can still check for structural deformities without climbing any treacherous ladders by using binoculars to zoom in-from the safety of the around—on everything from loose shingles to broken gutters. And if you're truly interested in prolonging your roof's life, experts say it pays to consult a professional roof contractor who's insured and uses quality materials. A free service that makes it easy to find a factory-certified contractor in your area can be found at www.gaf.com.

## **Preventing frozen** pipes

### from the Michigan Committee on Severe Weather Awareness

Frozen pipes aren't just an inconvenience. An average of a quarter-million homes are damaged and lives disrupted each winter, all because of frozen water pipes.

An eighth-inch crack in a pipe can spew up to 250 gallons of water a day, destroying floors, furniture, and personal property. Both plastic (PVC) and copper pipes can burst.

### **Before the Cold Hits:**

- **INSULATE** pipes in crawl spaces and attics, the ones most susceptible to freezing. Remember: The more insulation, the better protected your pipes will be.
- HEAT TAPE or thermostatically-controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Use only products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories, and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturer's installation and operating instructions.
- SEAL leaks that allow cold air inside, especially near the location of pipes. Look for air leaks around electrical wiring, dryer vents, and pipes. Use caulk or insulation to keep cold air out and the heat in. With severe wind chill, a tiny opening can let enough cold air inside to cause a pipe to freeze.
- 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 short span of pipe just inside the house.

### When the Mercury drops:

A TRICKLE of water might be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.

OPEN cabinet doors to allow heat to get to uninsulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

### If you're away:

SET the thermostat no lower than 55 degrees F.

ASK a friend or neighbor to check your house daily to make sure it's warm enough to prevent freezing, or...

PIPES - continues on page 13

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## \* Fallint VINTER \*-Are Your Fall Lawn and Garden Priorities | Beware of winter in Order?

FAMILY FEATURES

Fall is a pivotal time for lawn and garden care. If you want a beautiful spring yard that's a masterpiece, there important are steps to take now to ensure everything from grass to gardenias bloom. In fact, experts say there are five steps every yard or garden enthusiast should take in the fall – but many

don't. Here is an inside look at these important tips from the experts at GreenView to help you prepare your yard and garden this fall:

Fertilize in the fall - While many homeowners are tuned in to fertilizing their lawns in the spring, late summer through mid fall is really the most important time to fertilize. Fertilizers rich in slow-release nitrogen, such as GreenView with GreenSmart Fall Lawn Food, promote strong roots and long lasting results. Fertilizing at the beginning of

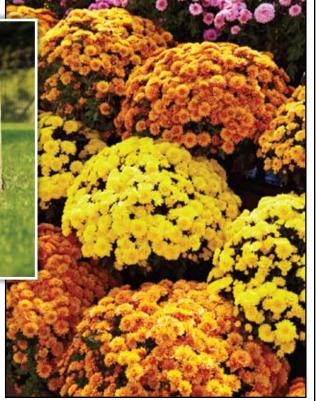
Make your own mulch

Plant bulbs deep - A



Photos Courtesy Getty Images the best chance of living through the winter.

Lengthen the life of your plants - Some plants that many consider seasonal can really survive year after year. For example, if taken care of correctly, mums can add color every fall to your flowerbeds. Planting mums using a plant food such as Mum Food from GreenView with GreenSmart prior to ground freeze allows roots to establish. For added protection against potentially harsh winter elements, surround the base of the plant with two inches of bark mulch or



collected fall leaves.

Save perennial pruning for spring - Gardeners are divided on when to prune perennials-spring or fall. While there is not one universal answer, experts recommend holding on pruning cold-killed foliage until spring. Research has found that the crumbling dead foliage helps insulate plants

and increase their cold tolerance.

Be sure you are in the know when it comes to fall yard and garden priorities to ensure a beautiful property next spring. For additional information visit www. GreenViewFertilizer.com, and sign up for their free seasonal lawn and garden tips newsletter.

## rodents



(NewsUSA) The rodents that dash indoors as uninvited winter guests aren't nearly as lovable as any of the furry friends in popular cartoons, but their sinister plots to take over your home are comparable to the likes of Pinky and the Brain.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rodents spread over 35 diseases worldwide, some of which are fatal or have lasting side-effects. Allergens from mice and rats also present health threats in the form of allergies and asthma attacks.

"Mice disperse hundreds of urine micro-droplets as they peruse your pantry and scurry throughout your home, polluting every inch they cross," says Missy Henriksen, vice president of public affairs for the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). "And if that's not off-putting enough, think about the allergic reaction that can be caused by the odor of a decaying mouse that died stuck between the walls or in the attic"

The commonly seen deer mouse is known for transmitting hantavirus, a rare but potentially fatal virus found in North America. Other rodent-related diseases are salmonellosis, tularemia and rat-bite fever, many of which are







## \* Rallinto WINTER \* Is your home ready for winter?

(StatePoint) With winter approaching, many Americans miss a few small, but crucial, ways to prepare their homes for the colder season.

"Some homeowners occasionally forget to or don't realize they should winterize their homes," says Leonard Kady, Principal of Leonard Kady Architecture, Interiors & Planning and chair of the American Institute of Architects Small Projects Practitioners committee. "Prepping your home properly for the season could save you the expense of repairing and painting after a harsh winter."

To help you prepare, Kady offers some helpful advice:

### **Check Fireplaces**

Make sure you keep fireplace dampers closed to protect against drafts. Leaving a damper open is the equivalent of leaving a window open.

Installing glass panels over the fireplace will also help keep drafts to a minimum and ultimately save you money on heating

### costs.

### **Clean the Gutters**

During winter, ice can build up in gutters and in order for the ice to melt and drain properly, the drains must be clear. Take time to clean your gutters now to prevent them from clogging or even bursting once colder temperatures set in.

### **Clear Outdoor** Watering Systems

Water trapped in an outdoor faucet or irrigation system can cause a pipe to burst if ice settles inside. Make it part of your winterizing routine to ensure that outdoor plumbing and pipes are clear before the temperatures start to drop. It can be a tricky task, so you may want to bring in a professional to help.

### **Keep Off the** Snow

Keeping your exterior walls clear of snow, especially on homes that have wood siding, could mean the difference between having to do another paint job or replace siding once the snow melts. This wa-





ter damage can be easily avoided with regular maintenance.

### Use Programmable Thermostats

Installing a programmable thermostat is a great way to prepare for winter. They are reasonably universal to install and allow you to program temperatures that make sense for your home, such as keeping it cooler during the day when no one is home.

### **Get Help**

An architect can check your home for pockets of energy inefficiency. To help ready your home for the winter months, find an architect in your area by visiting http://architectfinder.aia.org/.

### Heat Source Safety

from the Michigan Committee on Severe Weather Awarenes

Each year, fire claims the lives of 4,000 Americans, injures tens of thousands, and causes billions of dollars worth of damage. People living in rural areas are more than twice as likely to die in a fire as those living in mid-sized cities or suburban areas. The misuse of wood stoves, fireplaces, portable space heaters, and kerosene heaters is especially common in rural areas.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) believes rural fire problems can be reduced, by teaching people to recognize potential hazards.

The following precautionary steps can greatly reduce an individual's chances of becoming a fire casualty:

### Wood Stoves

Wood stoves cause over 9,000 residential fires every year. Carefully follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions. Look for as plate steel or cast iron metal. Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges, and door seals for smooth joints and seams. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, not green wood, artificial logs, or trash. Inspect and clean your pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions. Be sure to keep combustible objects at least three feet away from your wood stove.

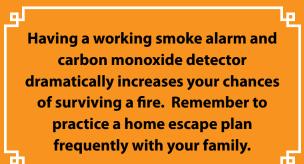
solid construction, such

### **Electric Space** Heaters

Only buy heaters with the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) safety listing. Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism, and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Heaters are not dryers or tables; don't dry clothes or store objects on top of your heater. Space heaters need available room around them; keep combustibles at least three feet away from each heat-



Preparation now can save you time and money later. This season, don't forget to winterize your home. PHOTO SOURCE: (c) Nic Lehoux



er. Always unplug your electric space heater when it is not in use.

### **Kerosene Heaters**

Buy only UL-approved heaters and check with your local fire department on the legality of using a kerosene heater in your community. Never fill your heater with gasoline or camp stove fuel; both flare up easily. Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. Never overfill any portable heater. Use the kerosene heater in a well ventilated room.

### Wood Burning **Fireplaces**

Fireplaces regularly build up creosote in their chimneys. Fireplaces need to be cleaned out frequently and chimneys should be inspected for obstruc-

tions and cracks to prevent deadly chimney and roof fires. Check to make sure the damper is open before starting any fire. Never burn trash, paper, or green wood in your fireplace. These materials cause heavy creosote buildup and are difficult to control. Use a screen heavy enough to stop rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace to catch flying sparks. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near any open flame. Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. Store cooled ashes in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.





## \* Fallinto WINTER \*

## Prepare your home to withstand any weather

(StatePoint) The weather these days seems to be more volatile than ever—swinging from record-setting heat waves to deep freezes, seemingly from one day to the next.

With the weather more varied and unpredictable, homeowners nationwide have learned lessons from the past year and are taking steps to ensure their houses can efficiently withstand whatever Mother Nature dishes out.

It's all about keeping homes sealed tightly, so water and wind can't leak in and tempered air doesn't leak out causing heating and cooling bills to rise.

### **Beware of Foundation Cracks**

Water is the enemy of your home's foundation. A change in moisture content of the soil around your home allows water to put pressure on the foundation, causing cracks and leaks.

Dry weather can cause the soil to shrink, while wet periods can cause it to soften. Poor drainage from your roof or improper ground slope around your home can funnel water against the foundation.

Make sure gutters are clean and that downspouts extend away from your home. Check that the soil, grass or pavement properly slopes away from your foundation.

### **Insulate Effectively**

Upgrading a home's insulation is an effective, easy way to increase energy efficiency while decreasing heating costs. The attic is a great start, but to achieve maximum efficiencies, don't overlook areas such as basements and rim joists.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates homeowners could save an average of at least \$250 yearly in heating costs by insulating basement walls. And by insulating



crawl spaces and rim joists, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates homeowners can save up to 20 percent on energy bills.

Opting for stone wool insulation, which is made from a combination of natural basalt rock and recycled slag, may provide greater benefits than traditional fiberglass insulation. One such thermal insulation is Roxul Comfort-Batt, a fire resistant, water repellant and sound absorbent insulation that is well-suited for use in exterior walls, attics, crawlspaces and basements. It also has a unique fiber composition and density that provides for an optimal fit between studs, joists, around ductwork, electrical boxes and plumbing. As another consideration for insulating, Roxul also offers Safe'n'Sound, another stone wool insulation product well-suited for soundproofing interior walls and ceilings between rooms. Its unique stone wool composition reduces sound transmissions by trapping sound waves and vibrations.

Before undertaking a home insulation project, do-ityourselfers can visit www.diywithroxul.com, to view free "how-to" videos detailing different insulation projects.

### **Inspect Your Roof**

Nothing can ruin a home faster than a leaky roof. Once yearly, check for signs of damage, such as sagging, aging, cracking, curling, tears or missing shingles. Pay particular attention to areas obscured by shade or vegetation.

Replace shingles that are lifting up or that have rot or heavy moss. Also inspect gutters, vents, overhangs and flashing. Repairs should be made as soon as you see a small problem, before it becomes a larger one.

Don't attempt to climb a roof that is steeply sloped. Instead, turn to a professional roofer or home inspector.



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# Seven steps to getting your car ready for winter

(ARA) Winter has a tendency to sneak up on all of us. But where you can simply dig the winter coat out of the closet when the first cold snap rolls through, preparing your car for winter takes a little more foresight.

Luckily, getting your car ready for the winter is not an intensive process and you'll save yourself a lot of stress by taking a little time to prepare. By checking off these seven items as you set up for cold-weather driving, you'll help ensure there aren't any surprises when the temperatures drop.

\* Check fluids. Most importantly check your coolant to make sure you have enough, as you'll be left without heat if you don't. Consult your owner's manual to find the correct blend if you need to add more. It's never a bad idea to keep extra coolant in your trunk in case of emergency. While you're at it, check to make sure your brake fluid, oil and transmission fluid are also at the proper levels.

\* Wash and wax your car at a professional car wash. It may seem counterintuitive to get your car nice and shiny for what's often the sloppiest season, but a thorough wash can remove harmful compounds that may cause damage when mixed with sand and road salt. Experts from the International Carwash Association also recommend a coat of wax for an extra laver of protection from the elements. Professional car washes can also save up to 20 percent of the amount of water you'd use by washing your car at home. They do this by treating and reusing their water, rather than releasing toxic chemicals and grime into the storm drains, which can often occur with pavement washing.

\* Check your tires. Checking to make sure your tires aren't worn and are properly inflated is especially important before winter sets in. Cold air can cause your tires to lose pressure, so be sure to check again once the temperature drops. The recommended tire pressure for your vehicle can be found on the inside of your driver's side door. Cracking, presence of wear bars and shallow treads are all indicators that you may need to replace your tires.

\* Check your wipers. When sloppy weather hits, you'll want to make sure you have a reservoir full of wiper fluid. Checking your wiper blades for wear and



replacing them if needed can prevent huge visibility headaches once snow and sleet arrive.

\* Test your battery. The next time you have the car in for an oil change, ask the mechanic to test your battery to make sure it can provide enough starting power once the temperature plummets.

\* Brakes. While you have your car in, ask for a brake inspection as well, as you'll need them to be in good working order when driving on slick roads.

\* Winter emergency kit. In addition to stocking your car with a scraper and brush, it's a good idea to include a few provisions in case you get stranded in snowy and cold conditions. Pack extra blankets, hats and gloves, highenergy snacks like granola bars, drinking water and a first-aid kit. Keeping a collapsible shovel in your trunk is also a good idea in case you get stuck.

Whether it's snow, ice, fog or freezing rain, winter driving certainly presents its challenges. But by making a few simple preparations before winter hits, you'll ensure that your car is ready to handle the challenges winter throws your way. And by making winter maintenance an annual ritual, you'll not only help keep you and your family safe, but also prolong the life of your car by preparing it to stand up to the elements.

## **Rodents**

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transferred from ticks or mites living on the rodents. But that isn't the only kind of baggage mice and rats bring with





them; their damage can be twofold. Rodents don't just target your health and food; they frequently cause structural damage to your home. Aside from leaving the telltale dark brown droppings, a common sign of an infestation, mice and rats are capable of chewing through wood, pipes, aluminum, cement and sheet rock. Plus, wires-turned-chew toys can lead to electrical shortages and fires.

As colder temperatures spur a rodent migration, seal up any holes or cracks around walls, doors and win-



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dows. Deer mice and house mice are able to squeeze through spaces the size of a nickel, such as those found next to pipes and weather stripping. If you notice holes and rips in cereal boxes and other pantry food items along with a trail of droppings, it's time to call your pest professional. Learn more about rodent prevention at www.pestworld.org, including how to find a pest management professional near you.

### Page 13

### NTFR 🐇 into

## A winter checklist for drivers

(NewsUSA) - As the temperature drops, car batteries produce less power, belts and hoses become more brittle, tires lose air pressure and engine oil thickens. In a few words, winter is tough on vehicles.

"Marginally operating systems can fail outright in extreme weather," notes Martin Lawson, editorial director for the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).

The following tips from ASE will help motorists prepare for winter's toughest conditions:

Cooling System. The level, condition, and concentration of the coolant should be checked to prevent breakdowns and potential engine damage from freezing or overheating. The tightness and condition of drive belts, clamps and hoses should be checked at the same time.

Oil. Change your oil and oil filter as specified in your manual. In extremely cold regions, switching to winter-grade oil, which has a lower viscosity and makes starting your vehicle easier, may be necessary.

Engine Performance. Get engine problems, like hard starts, stalling and rough idling, corrected early, since cold weather makes existing problems worse.



Winter weather can exacerbate problems in vehicles, Ignoring issues could have you walking on the side of the road.

Windshield Wipers. Replace worn, streaking blades. If your winters are especially harsh, get rubber-clad (winter) blades. Carry extra windshield-washer solvent and a quality ice-scraper.

Battery. Can't recall when you bought a new battery? A weak one is likely to fail in the winter. Have its charge checked at a good repair shop to be sure.

Tires. Balding tires are useless in winter's snow and slush. Replace them with all-season tires, or snow tires if your region gets heavy snow. Check the air pressure of all tires including your spare. Emergencies.

Carry gloves, boots, blankets, a winter coat, flares, a small shovel, sand or kitty litter, tire chains, a flashlight, a cell phone, and some non-perishable snacks.

Safety. Clear all snow and ice off your vehicle before driving. Keep headlights and taillights cleaned of snow and road grime for visibility yours and the other drivers'.

Visit www.ase.com for more seasonal car care tips.

## Pipes

.continued from page 8

SHUT OFF and drain the water system. Be aware that if you have a fire protection sprinkler system in your house, it will be deactivated when you shut off the water.

### If your pipes freeze:

- DON'T TAKE CHANCES. If you turn on your faucets and nothing comes out, leave the faucets turned on and call a plumber. If you detect your water pipes
- have frozen, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve in the house; leave the water faucets turned on.

Make sure everyone in your family is aware of where the water shutoff valve is and how to open and close it.

- **NEVER** try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame. Water damage is preferable to fire damage. You may be able to thaw a frozen pipe with the warm air from a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe.
- DO NOT use electrical appliances in areas of standing water because electrocution is possible.







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