



Winter preparation checklist

By **Dan Howard**

for TRIB TOTAL MEDIA



Winter will soon be storming into our lives and it is time to get ready for that cold, hard reality. The sad news is that even if your personal preparation for cold weather is packing the car and heading south, your home still needs preparation.

ASSEMBLE YOUR "COLD WEATHER TEAM"

One of the first members of the team should be a good furnace company that will service "no heat" calls for their regular customers. The most important part of that sentence is the "regular customer" part. You do not want your first contact with a furnace company to begin with the sentence: "You do not know me, but I don't have any heat." The story here is to call a reputable company, have them service the furnace for winter and become a part of their customer list. Your bonus is that, with proper service and adjustment, fuel costs go down and the safety and life expectancy of a furnace go up.

If you have a fireplace you plan to use, have it cleaned and checked with a camera system before you use it. There will be house fires started with fireplace use and you do not want the picture of your burning home to be on the 11:00 PM News.

Find a "house buddy" for your Cold Weather Team. This can be friend, relative or neighbor. This is a simple concept. You are away from home on a winter vacation, the power goes off. You want your house looked in on. You call your house buddy and they make sure everything is Okey dokey, or they call in the cavalry, whichever is appropriate. You do the same for them. With today's digital doorknobs, you don't even need to swap keys. The door combination is all that is needed.

SET UP A WINTER EMERGENCY KIT

You know the basics. Purchase enough bottled water to last a couple of days. At the same time pick up some non-perishable food. If it is canned, add a can opener to the kit.

Most of the winter preparation lists suggest candles and matches. Modern technology has made that an unnecessary fire risk. We own a couple of the LED lanterns for emergencies. As a bonus, the LED lights last longer than candles.

Have a method ready to check what is going on in the world. Emergency radios are the most common mentioned method, but with all types of communication and long life batteries, don't overlook Facebook on your smart phone or a laptop with an air card. It is nothing short of amazing and wonderful that everyone with a cell phone can receive a text message of a pending emergency.

CHECK YOUR WINTER WEATHER SAFETY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Install smoke detectors in every level of your home and in each bedroom. If you have any fossil fuel appliances, have carbon monoxide detectors in the home. Test each device for operation and install fresh batteries before winter.

If you have crawl spaces or are away from home for vacation, consider a freeze alarm that can call your cell phone and warn you before your house freezes.

TAKE A LONG HARD LOOK AT ATTACHMENT ISSUES

I am not referring to any emotional ties. You are used to "cleaning gutters" being on the winter preparation list. What you need to add is checking that the gutters and downspouts are tightly secured to the home. Ice loaded gutters can cause injury or damage when they fall.

At the same time as you are checking your gutters to see if they are secure, check decks and porches for proper attachment to the house. In the course of inspecting homes, I can tell you that I often find loose gutters, porches and decks.

Check your trees near your house and power lines. A falling tree or even a tree



THE COMMON WINTER PREPARATION TIPS

- Clean the leaves. This isn't just about the gutters. Blocked gutters and downspouts can cause backups and damage to walls.
- Leaves on decks, concrete and siding can cause staining and rot. Clean these up too.
- Remove garden hoses. Attached hoses can burst the pipes they are connected to.
- Look at the roof and flashings. If repairs are needed, do them before the roof is covered with snow.
- Stock up on bagged salt or sand.

limb can damage your home or leave you without power. Add snow and ice to a dead limb and it can be downright dangerous.

FORGOTTEN WINTER PREPARATION STEPS THAT MAY SURPRISE YOU

Check your clothes dryer vents. Lint packed vents can be a fire hazard. With the newer dryers, partially blocked vents can also cause damage to the dryer. Ask how do I know? Oops, I forgot that one last year and it cost me a new heating element for our clothes dryer. You may want to learn from my \$200.00 oversight.

If you have a generator, run your generator for 1/2 hour each month. Have fresh gas for your generator on hand. With the new

10% ethanol gas blends, the gas can gel and clog your generator carburetor. They do make anti gel additives for gas or you may use a high octane fuel to avoid the problem.

Let's hope for a few more beautiful fall days before the snow flies. There needs to be time to enjoy the season and get the fall list done.

For more information and links go to www.envirospect.info/WinterPrep.

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