



Weatherizing Your Home for a Chicago Winter



Chicago winters are no joke—freezing temps, heavy snow and ice can all take a toll on your home. Use this practical fall checklist to stay comfortable, safe and energy-efficient all season long.

Windows & Doors

- ☐ **Check for drafts:** Adjust, recalibrate or reset windows and doors for a tight seal. Add weatherstripping or caulk where needed.
- ☐ **Upgrade protection:** Install storm windows/doors or use shrink-fit insulation kits from [your local hardware store](#).
- ☐ **Seal entry points:** Add permanent thresholds or door sweeps to exterior doors.
- ☐ **Remove screens:** Take out insect screens to let in more light and reduce frost buildup.

Insulation & Air Sealing

- ☐ **Seal wall leaks:** Add foam gaskets behind outlets/switches on exterior walls.
- ☐ **Close hidden gaps:** Seal rim joists, chimney dampers, recessed lights and any exterior penetrations caused by cables, plumbing pipes, gas vents and electrical wires.
- ☐ **Check attic insulation:** Most attics are under-insulated—measure your R-value and add more if needed.
- ☐ **Don't forget the hatch:** Insulate and weatherstrip attic stairs or access panels.
 - ➔ **Pro Tip:** The #1 failure point we see is uninsulated attic access. Even if you've got a foot of insulation everywhere else, leaving that hatch bare is like punching a hole right through your thermal blanket. Warm air that should stay in your home rushes up and out through this weak spot—and the “vacuum effect” pulls cold air in through your windows and doors. The result? Drafts, wasted energy, and higher bills.

Pipes & Plumbing Protection

- ☐ **Winterize outdoor faucets:** Shut off the water line to traditional spigots or install a frost-free hose bib that drains automatically.
- ☐ **Disconnect hoses:** Even frost-free bibs can burst seals and leak if a hose is left attached. Drain spigots and add insulated covers.
- ☐ **Protect exposed pipes:** In unheated spaces, wrap pipes with foam insulation or heat tape.
- ☐ **Check sump pump:** Test operation and consider adding a battery backup.
- ☐ **Inspect window wells:** Clear drains, install covers and replace leaky wells. Ensure the ground slopes away from the house to prevent basement flooding.
- ☐ **On frigid nights:** Open cabinet doors that have plumbing pipes in an exterior wall and let faucets drip if pipes run through exterior walls.

Heating System & Ducts

- ☐ **Schedule a tune-up:** Have your furnace or boiler serviced before the cold hits.
- ☐ **Replace filters:** Swap them out regularly to keep your system efficient and your air clean. Bring your old filter to [your local hardware store](#) to make sure you get the right size.
- ☐ **Balance ducts:**
 - ☐ **Winter →** Push warm air downstairs.
 - ☐ **Summer →** Push cool air upstairs.
- ☐ **Seal and insulate ducts:** Have any ductwork insulated in unconditioned spaces.
- ☐ **Smart thermostat:** Save 8–15% on heating bills with programmable settings.



Roof & Gutters

- ☐ **Clear gutters and downspouts:** If you have an underground drain, make sure that it's flowing freely.
- ☐ **Add gutter guards:** Reduce clogs from leaves and ice.
- ☐ **Prevent ice dams:** Install roof heating cables if you've had past issues.
- ☐ **Trim trees:** Cut back branches near the house to avoid snow or ice damage.



**Ben Franklin said,
“An ounce of prevention
is worth a pound of cure.”**

**Your home is your biggest investment.
Protect it for the future by staying current
with home maintenance and repairs.**

Indoor Comfort & Safety

- ☐ **Reverse ceiling fans:** Push warm air down into living spaces (fans should spin clockwise).
- ☐ **Maintain your fireplace:** Have the chimney cleaned; close the damper when not in use.
- ☐ **Test detectors:** Ensure smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are working.
- ☐ **Manage humidity:** Keep it between 30–40% to reduce dryness and condensation. Invest in a whole home humidifier that's attached to your furnace, or portable/console units from [your local hardware store](#).
- ☐ **Stay prepared:** Stock fire extinguishers and flashlights, blankets and water.

Exterior & Yard Prep

- ☐ **Seal gaps:** Check around pipes, vents and utility entry points.
- ☐ **Prep snow gear:** Tune up the snowblower, stock shovels and keep salt or eco-friendly deicer handy.



Backup Power

- ☐ **Consider a standby generator:** Natural gas models provide peace of mind during outages. A short-term fix is purchasing a portable, battery-operated generator from your local hardware store; a sales associate can help you choose the right one for your needs.
- ☐ **Protect your home:** Keep heat running, prevent frozen pipes and avoid food loss during blackouts.

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weatherization projects?
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