

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Prepare Your Home For Winter Weather

(NAPSA)—Taking a few precautionary steps now can help ensure that you and your family stay warm when the cold weather hits—without spending a fortune on heating bills.

Dan Steward, president of Pillar to Post, North America's largest home-inspection service, offers these tips for winterizing your home.

• **Seal leaks around entry points**—Add or replace worn weather stripping around doors and windows. Caulk gaps where necessary. Replace worn doorstops at the bottom of doors. Use caulking and weather stripping around entry points for all pipes and ducts that travel through an exterior wall.

• **Check insulation**—Inspect attic insulation to make certain that it's adequate. Proper attic insulation keeps a home warmer in the winter by reducing heat loss through the ceiling. Consult with a home-insulation specialist to find out how much insulation is recommended in your area.

• **Inspect the heating system**—Hire a home heating specialist to do a routine check of the heating system before the cold weather hits. Vacuum heating vents and other heating components. Replace the furnace filter. Install a setback thermostat to regulate the temperature, allowing the home to be cooler when homeowners are away or asleep.

• **Check the fireplace**—Hire a chimney service professional to inspect and clean the chimney. Close the fireplace damper when not in use to eliminate cold drafts. Consider installing a wood-burning fireplace or gas log fireplace to cut costs on utility bills.



Winterizing a home before the cold months hit can pay huge dividends.

• **Check the roof**—Replace loose or missing shingles or roof tiles. Have a licensed roofer fix gaps that could potentially get worse and cause melting snow or rain to seep through. Check and clean gutters. Trim tree limbs hanging over or touching the roof; snow and wind can cause branches to break off, potentially damaging the roof.

• **Winterize the plumbing**—Exposed pipes can freeze and crack; heat tape can be used to keep them warm during extremely cold weather. Repair leaking pipes and learn how to turn off water at its source so that you can stop leaks immediately. Drain water from outdoor faucets when you think a hard freeze is coming.

In addition, Steward suggests that homeowners know how to turn off the water, gas and electricity, repair leaking taps, and wrap cisterns, boilers and electrically heated water tanks with insulating jackets. There is a potential fire hazard in wrapping gas- or oil-heated water tanks.

For more information, visit www.pillartopost.com.