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## **Fall Preparation Ideas**

*by James R. Ziglinski, C.R.*



September has always been known as the month for preparation. The kids are preparing to return to school, harvest is just around the corner, and homeowners are getting set for the coming winter.

Fall preparation and maintenance give much to consider. The best way to go about things is to set a priority list. Walk around your home and list whatever you see that is wrong, no matter how large or small. After the list is complete, sit down and place the items in order of how important they are to the home's structure, as opposed to what may be easier to get at or what can be done during halftime. You've invested a lot of love, time, and money into your home; you should maintain it with the same conviction.

Some of the most common notations that will be found on these lists are maintenance needs that cropped up last winter but were never resolved because they did not affect anything during the summer. As you walk around your home, run your hand along the backside or seams of your downspouts. If these are bulged or split from last winter's ice dams, you should change them before this winter rolls around. Look at the gutter itself. Recall heavy icicles that hung from them last year. Check to see if the gutter runs are still properly secured to the house and see if all of the seams are sealed. You should also make certain that the roof/gutter joint is properly sealed. This will help prevent interior water staining of the ceilings and aid in the prevention of ice dams.

The best prevention for ice dams is a properly vented and insulated roof, an investment that will also reflect itself in savings on your utility bills. If I had to name the most often neglected item in any home, I would have to list proper venting as Number One. What is so ironic is that this one item affects almost everything else you may consider. Improperly vented homes have trouble keeping paint, have chronic condensation problems, and have incurable mold and mildew buildup. Therefore, it is most important to have proper venting at the very top of your list.

Another matter often left from the previous year would be the storm windows. When I had wood storms and screens, I'd swear that the minute the storms are removed, they would be puttied and painted for the next year. Every year, I'd say it, and every year, it was left until a day or two before they had to be reinstalled. I finally got tired of the putty, paint, and put off, and I invested in combination storm windows. I still have to wash them, but that can be done during halftime.

-September is also the time to prepare the furnace. Most homeowners know to change the filters and oil the fans and motors. Most commonly forgotten, however, is the exhaust or the chimney. Sure you open the clean out door, see if it's clean, and remove any debris. But what about the structure itself? Is the flashing secure and sealed? Examine the mortar, making sure that it is intact. If not, now is the time to

have the chimney tuck pointed, sealed with a masonry sealer, and have a flue liner cap installed to help prevent birds and rodents from finding their way down the chimney.

If the exterior is in need of caulking around the doors and windows, invest in good quality caulking. Don't be taken in by the deluge of 99 cent seasonal caulking sales, unlike you like "do and re-do".

The same can be said for the paint you choose; make sure that the paint you or your contractor select is high quality. Also, as I mention time and again in articles and seminars, it is important to find the reasons that your present paint is peeling before you repaint or install siding over damaged paint. To mask the problem just puts it off; it doesn't resolve anything.

Continuing your walk, you should inspect the areas where your walkways or your patio join the foundation. If there is a crack there, it should be filled properly. Filling it with mortar will only make it a seasonal chore; mortar is too rigid, and will crack every time the concrete slabs shift. A proper repair can be done with foam backer rod and a special concrete caulking manufactured just for this type of area, which stays elastic and moves with the concrete.

Next, check you door's weather stripping and the exposed foundation areas. Are all the cracks sealed, and are the doors as tight as possible? This will help prevent heat loss, and as a side benefit, aid in rodent proofing your home. The foundation is especially important around outside water or electrical outlets. Eight out of ten homes have gaps in these areas large enough to admit mice.

The last point is to use common sense. Don't close off the attic vents, and above all, don't vent your clothes dryer inside. These common mistakes will only aid in trapping excessive amounts of moisture in your home and help to incubate mold and mildew spores. The alleged energy savings you may think these steps provide simply do not exist; in fact, it takes three times the energy to dry out the trapped interior moisture than would have been used if you'd let things vent outside in the first place.

So, decide upon your priorities, and keep the maintenance goals you set for yourself. Then, when the football games are on, you can enjoy the halftime shows instead of running around doing a half shod job in a rush to get back to the game.

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We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at [www.aroundyourhouse.net](http://www.aroundyourhouse.net), or contact Jim at Around Your House.

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