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Before the cold arrives

A walk around your home you can do on a Saturday, with no special tools for most of it.

Outside

- [ ] Disconnect and drain garden hoses
- [ ] Shut off and drain outdoor faucets that have an inside shutoff; put a foam cover on the rest
- [ ] Clean the gutters, or hire it out if that means a tall ladder
- [ ] Check that downspouts carry water away from the house
- [ ] Drain sprinkler lines before the first hard freeze
- [ ] Cover or put away patio furniture and the grill
- [ ] Stock ice melt and a shovel by the door

Heating

- [ ] Change the furnace filter
- [ ] Schedule the yearly furnace or boiler service
- [ ] Run the heat once before you need it
- [ ] Keep at least three feet clear around heaters
- [ ] Have the chimney checked before the first fire

Plumbing

- [ ] Find the main water shutoff and turn it gently once; if it is stiff, do not force it, call a plumber
- [ ] Wrap exposed pipes in the garage, attic and crawl space
- [ ] Fix dripping faucets and running toilets

Doors and windows

- [ ] Replace worn weatherstrip and door sweeps
- [ ] Caulk gaps around windows and where water pipes come through walls
- [ ] Swap screens for storm windows

Safety

- [ ] Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- [ ] Put new batteries in any alarm that takes them
- [ ] Replace smoke alarms over 10 years old and CO alarms past the date on the label
- [ ] Check that the fire extinguisher's gauge reads in the green
- [ ] Put a flashlight and fresh batteries where you can find them

Gas, electrical and chimney work are jobs for a licensed professional. Never seal around furnace or water heater vents. Your local climate and your equipment's manual come first.