

## Last Minute Precautions to Protect Your Home from Arctic Blast

Written by Tami Fillyaw  
Monday, 06 January 2014 13:47

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An arctic blast is dropping temperatures in the U.S. to lows not seen in years. According to the National Weather Service, 140 million people across the United States will shiver in temperatures of zero or lower. As temperatures continue to drop, and snow and ice threaten nearly half the nation, the nonprofit Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH) recommends some last minute precautions that will help keep families safe and comfortable:

### Prevent Frozen Pipes

Damage from frozen pipes is the second most common cause of insurance claims in America. The average homeowner will have to spend thousands to repair damage from a frozen, leaking pipe.

- **FOAM:** Insulate pipes exposed to the elements or cold drafts. For as little as \$1 per 6' of insulation, you can stop pipes from freezing and save energy. By keeping your water warmer, you reduce the amount of energy needed to heat water in the cold, winter months.
- **DOMES:** Place an insulating dome or other coverings on outdoor faucets and spigots also reduce the likelihood of the water in your home's pipes freezing, expanding and causing a costly leak. You can purchase one for under \$2 from your local home improvement store.
- **DRIP:** By allowing a slow drip from your faucets, you reduce the build-up of pressure in

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the pipes. Even if the pipes freeze, you have released the pressure from the water system reducing the likelihood of a rupture.

### Prevent Ice Dams

Ice dams are formed when air in the attic is warm enough to cause snow and ice on the roof to thaw and refreeze repeatedly. Pools of water then become trapped under layers of ice that seep under your roof covering (tiles or shingles) into the attic.

- Seal all openings that would allow vapor to rise into the attic; this includes any holes created from installing light fixtures or ceiling fans.
- Keep gutters and downspouts clear to allow melted snow and ice to flow away from your home.
- Don't use salt or other minerals to melt the snow on your roof. These are very damaging to roof shingles and tiles not to mention gutters and downspouts.

### Check Your Insulation

Doors and windows are just some of the places that you should ensure are well insulated before the temperatures start to drop.

- Check for air leaks around windows and doors using a lit incense stick. If the smoke is sucked out of an opening, seal the leak with caulk, spray foam or weather stripping.

### Winterize Outside Your Home

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- Lay down a layer of deicing sand/salt to minimize the buildup of ice during the storm.
- If you have time, clean your gutters so water doesn't back up and freeze.
- After blizzard conditions pass, lay down layers of deicing sand/salt to melt the snow and ice. Once it begins to melt you can chip away at the layers with a snow shovel to move it off of steps and walkways.
- Turn off and drain all of your outdoor plumbing including hose connections, pool connections, sprinkler systems, etc. After you've turned off the water, leave faucets in the "on" position and remove any plastic components.

### Have Emergency Kits in Your Home and Car

In case the power goes out, you should have flashlights, batteries, a three-day supply of food and water for everyone including pets, a battery-powered radio and a first-aid kit. Make the same emergency kit for your car but add blankets and a distress flag. Be sure to keep tow and tire chains in your trunk as well. If you have time, consider buying a generator for your home, which will help keep your power, heat and security alarms running as well as help prevent frozen pipes.

For more information on weathering winter this season, visit [www.greatwinterweatherparty.org](http://www.greatwinterweatherparty.org)  
or  
[www.flash.org](http://www.flash.org)