

8 Winter Maintenance Tips for Renters

Winter is here and while some [renters](https://mycalcas.com/2021/01/faqs-about-roommates-and-renters-insurance/) may not be responsible for every task (e.g., snow or ice removal) this season, there are still important steps you need to take as a tenant to make sure your home or apartment is ready for the cold months ahead.

Follow our renter’s [winter maintenance](https://mycalcas.com/2019/11/winter-maintenance-for-your-home-and-auto/) checklist below.

**1. Know your responsibilities.** Before the cool weather hits, schedule a meeting with your landlord or property manager to see what your responsibilities will be for the winter and what will be taken care of by the property owner. In an apartment, some winter responsibilities, like laying down salt, plowing driveways, heating and cooling system tune-ups, etc., are taken care of by the complex. But if you are renting a home, you will need to check with your landlord or take a look at your lease agreement to find out whose responsibility it is to make sure your home gets properly winterized.

**2. Test the heating system.** It’s better to know early on if there are any problems, so run the heat for a bit even if it’s not very cold out yet. Be on the lookout for odd smells when the heat is on. Take note of any issues, such as inconsistent heat throughout your apartment or house. You can ask your landlord about scheduling regular inspections of your HVAC system, chimney or fireplace. Regular [maintenance of your appliances](https://mycalcas.com/2021/10/fall-appliance-maintenance/) helps keep everything in good working order. Remember to check the batteries in your digital thermostat if it has them. Also test your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. You may need to replace batteries on your own, but you could always ask your landlord to reimburse you for the purchase.

Pro Tip: Turn your ceiling fans on low in reverse (clockwise when looking up) to circulate warm air and help [save on heating costs](https://mycalcas.com/2021/09/ways-to-lower-your-home-insurance-costs/).

**3. Clean inside and out.** Just as you might do spring cleaning, it’s time to clean for winter. Vacuum the vents and change out the filters in your HVAC system [to improve air quality](https://mycalcas.com/2021/12/improving-your-indoor-air-quality-during-winter-months/). Remove dust and dirt from fans, radiators, heat registers. Sweep under appliances. Clean the drains in your sinks, bathtubs, showers, and dishwashers. While you’re at it, check for any signs of dripping that could signal a problem, and alert your landlord immediately. Clean your garbage disposal. If you’re renting a home, clear any debris from your yard. Remove wet leaves from gutters – or alert your landlord it needs to be done. If clogged gutters remain, water can back up, [causing leaks and ice dams](https://mycalcas.com/2021/01/winter-roof-care-preventing-snow-build-up-and-ice-dams/), and ultimately damage the home’s roof and siding.

**4. Check for drafts.** As a renter, you’re probably responsible for paying utilities. Make sure you’re not losing heat this winter to cracks or openings near [windows](https://mycalcas.com/2021/12/winter-window-hacks-to-keep-your-home-warm-toasty/) or doors. Weather-stripping is the most likely fix to be landlord-approved but, if allowed, you also could caulk to fill in the gaps. Speak to your landlord about what is approved and what has been done in the past. And don’t forget to cover or remove your window air conditioners to prevent additional drafts.

**5. Protect your water lines.** If you’re in a house, disconnect and drain garden hoses, turn off the sprinkler system, and cover outside faucets with insulating foam covers (your landlord may have these from previous winters, so check with them before purchasing any). If the temperature drops below 20 degrees, keep one or more faucets running slowly [to keep the line from freezing.](https://mycalcas.com/2020/11/checklist-preventing-and-thawing-frozen-pipes/) Open up cabinet doors where pipes are located to allow warm air to circulate and warm the pipes. Always know where your water main is located in case you have to shut it off. Call your landlord if you suspect a pipe has frozen or broken. He/she may direct you to point a space heater at the frozen pipe or call a repairman to take a look.

Pro Tip: If you go on vacation this winter- even if it’s just for a few days, don’t turn the heat completely off. Leave it at least 55 degrees to prevent any problems with frozen pipes.

**6. Prepare for snow and ice removal.** Generally, apartment complexes and landlords are responsible for snow and ice removal in public areas, but you may need to clear these potential hazards on your own if you are renting a home. Know [the state laws for snow removal](https://www.rentecdirect.com/blog/the-complete-guide-to-snow-removal-laws-by-state/) and your landlord’s policies. County or city regulations may also apply. Consider buying a snow shovel and some salt/ice melt if you don’t have it. Some communities prohibit the use of salt so you can use synthetic ice melt or cat litter. Talk to your landlord immediately if you notice any [damage](https://mycalcas.com/2020/12/winter-damage-and-your-homeowners-insurance/) from snow or ice.

**7. Have an emergency plan.** Extremely low temperatures are dangerous and can even be life-threatening, especially coupled with snow and ice. Sign up for [severe weather alerts](https://mycalcas.com/2021/09/how-to-sign-up-for-severe-weather-alerts/) with your town or county and have a [disaster plan](https://mycalcas.com/2021/09/divorced-parents-disaster-prep/) in place, along with an [emergency kit](https://mycalcas.com/2019/09/preparedness-how-to-build-an-emergency-kit/) fully stocked with food and water. Notify your landlord of any issues as soon as possible before they spiral out of control. And know the emergency contact number to call or text if the heat or power goes out.

**8. Protect your home and possessions.** Starting at around $10 a month, [renter’s insurance](https://www.calcas.com/renters-insurance) is an affordable option and a necessity for renters. Your landlord’s property insurance will not cover your personal items. Being well prepared is your best defense against unwanted surprises this winter. And at such a low cost, this coverage will pay for itself.

Pro Tip: Bundle your renter’s policy with a California Casualty auto policy and you may qualify for discounts on your premiums! [Speak to an agent today](https://www.calcas.com/contact-us) to see how much you can save.

*California Casualty has been serving the needs of educators since 1951 and is the only auto and home insurance company to earn the trust and endorsement of the National Education Association (NEA). As a result, NEA members qualify for exceptional rates, deductibles waived for vandalism or collisions to your vehicle parked at school, holiday or summer skip payment plans and free Identity Defense protection – exclusive benefits not available to the general public. Learn how to save by getting a quote at* [*www.calcas.com/neamb*](http://www.calcas.com/neamb)*, or by calling 1.800.800.9410.*