Fall readiness checklist

Complete 18-step guide - large print

Choose one manageable step at a time. Use qualified help for work beyond your skills or physical abilities. Do not climb or handle electrical, gas, structural, or roof work because it appears on a checklist.

Before you turn up the heat

01. Test smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms.

Follow the manufacturer's testing, battery, placement, and replacement instructions. Make sure everyone recognizes the alarms.

02. Arrange heating service and check the filter.

Have a qualified technician check the heating system. Use the correct filter and replacement schedule for your equipment.

03. Check the fireplace or wood stove before using it.

Arrange professional inspection and cleaning as needed. Keep anything that can burn away from heaters.

04. Clear the dryer's lint filter and arrange vent cleaning.

Clean the lint filter after every load. Have the exhaust duct checked and cleaned; do not use a damaged or crushed duct.

Before freezing weather

05. Check gutters, downspouts, and drainage.

Look from the ground for leaves, overflow, loose sections, and water collecting near the house. Ask a suitably equipped person to handle work at height.

06. Look for roof and exterior trouble from the ground.

Check for damaged shingles, loose trim, or signs of leaks. Have a qualified contractor assess repairs.

07. Disconnect hoses and prepare outdoor faucets.

Drain and store hoses. Follow your faucet or sprinkler system's winterizing instructions, including any indoor shutoff.

08. Identify exposed pipes and the main water shutoff.

Follow guidance for insulating vulnerable pipes. If a pipe freezes, never use an open flame to thaw it.

Make a power outage easier

09. Start a household food and water supply.

Aim for a three-day portable kit and build longer home supplies as you can. Include drinking water, easy food, a manual can opener, and your pets' needs.

10. Put a flashlight or battery light where you can find it.

Test lights and batteries. Choose lighting you can safely use without an open flame.

11. Charge devices and write down important contacts.

Check a power bank if you have one. Keep phone numbers on paper and choose reliable local weather and emergency information.

12. Agree on a warm place to go and a way to get there.

Include children, pets, mobility needs, and trusted contacts. Ask care providers about plans for medication or powered medical equipment.

Make the house easier to use

13. Check doors and windows for drafts.

Repair worn weatherstripping and seal suitable gaps. Keep required ventilation and appliance clearances open.

14. Clear leaves and obstacles from walking paths.

Check steps, handrails, and outdoor lighting. Put snow-clearing supplies somewhere accessible before you need them.

15. Put everyday essentials within reach.

Keep a light, contact list, warm clothing, and the supplies you use most in an easy-to-reach place.

Look out for a neighbor

16. Ask someone nearby how they are getting ready.

Include older neighbors or caregivers who would welcome a conversation. Ask what would be useful to them.

17. Offer one manageable thing you can share.

A spare flashlight, a printed checklist, an explanation, or a little time can help. Confirm arrangements together.

18. Agree on voluntary check-ins.

Choose who will contact whom during a disruption and how. Exchange personal details privately and only with permission.

Heating and generator safety

Generators belong outdoors, at least 20 feet from doors, windows, and vents, with exhaust directed away from buildings. Never heat your home with a grill or kitchen oven. Keep portable heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn, and turn them off before sleeping or leaving.

Questions or supply barriers?

Visit neighborreadynetwork.org/request-help. Create a free account, verify your email, and sign in to submit a private request. Your request stays linked to your account. Supplies and volunteer assistance must be confirmed; requests do not guarantee help. For emergencies, call 911.

Sources and original guide

neighborreadynetwork.org/fall-readiness - source links, videos, print control, and private account-based requests.

American Red Cross: winter storms - Household supplies, warm shelter, and safe heating
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.html

American Red Cross: frozen pipes - Outdoor hoses, vulnerable pipes, and safe thawing
https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm/frozen-pipes.html

U.S. Department of Energy - Heating maintenance, filters, and weatherstripping
https://www.energy.gov/cmei/femp/home-energy-checklist

U.S. Fire Administration - Dryer and household fire prevention
https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/home-fires/prevent-fires/basement-and-garage/

National Weather Service Louisville - Local forecasts and weather information
https://www.weather.gov/lmk/