

5 Tips for Snowbirds: How to Winterize and Protect Your Home While Away

Temperatures are dropping and snowbirds are flocking south for a warm winter, but before leaving for weeks or even months, make sure to take necessary precautions to keep your home safe while away.

Follow these five easy steps to winterize and protect your home:

Protect your pipes from freezing to avoid water damage

A frozen or busted pipe will cause significant water damage, so if you are leaving for a long period of time consider turning off your water supply.

Be aware that when your water is turned off, any access water left in pipes can cause freezing. To avoid this, make sure to drain all water before leaving, here's how:

- After turning your water off, open all faucets and flush your toilet to clear any water from the tank or bowl
- Consider pouring antifreeze into toilet tanks and bowls to prevent any remaining water from freezing or cracking (always use nontoxic antifreeze designed for plumbing systems)

Please note: if your home is heated by a steam system or if your home is protected by a fire sprinkler system, do not turn off your water.

Keep your furnace running smoothly

If you are not turning off your water, you need to make sure your furnace is running smoothly to prevent pipe damage. Keep your house at a minimum of 65 degrees or higher to keep the interiors wall and floors (where pipes are located) warm enough to prevent freezing.

To further protect yourself from heating issues, make sure to replace your furnace filters. Dirty furnace filters can reduce efficiency and shorten the furnace's lifespan. Consult your unit's user manual, but on average, the furnace filter should be changed every 3 months.

Overall, to ensure your furnace's longevity and to reduce the chance of expensive breakdowns, get your unit inspected by a heating professional yearly.

Install a programmable thermostat to maintain your household temperature

Even when you're on the go, this Wi-Fi-enabled smart controller puts the comforts of home right at your fingertips. Adjust your heat, air, and humidity levels from your phone to keep your energy bills low.

According to Energy Star, programmable thermostats can save you up to \$180 per year in energy bills. They do this by regulating the temperature of the home automatically and consistently, helping your heating system perform efficiently.

Smart thermostats can be used with Perfect Aire room air conditioners and mini-split systems to automatically regulate temperatures within your home. Even better, this thermostat can be controlled right from your phone, putting the power to conveniently regulate your household temperatures and humidity levels right at your fingertips.

To prevent your home pipes from freezing, program your thermostat to at least 65 degrees.

Keep away pests

In your kitchen, clean, defrost and unplug appliances that won't be in use like microwaves, coffee makers, TVs, and fridges. Clean these units out using soap and warm water, making sure that no food or crumbs are left behind. When cleaning out your fridge, wait until the interior is fully dry before closing the doors, this will prevent mildew.

If you have a fireplace, make sure the flue is closed. These openings have been known to attract bats, birds, and squirrels, who crawl through openings to find heat.

Lastly, check weather stripping, insulation, and exterior doors for cracks, as these openings can also invite in small insects and other animals.