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to extend your old windows for a few more years, let's see what we can do to give them more winter weather protection.

First of all, check the putty around the window that sticks to the wood frame or against the brick or aluminum siding. Take your thumb and push in on that caulking material. If it is like a rock, it is not doing anybody any good. You can remove it with one of the putty removers on the market that heat and soften the putty to make that job a lot easier. Now is the ideal time to replace it. Check the glazing that holds the glass against the window surface. If that is cracked and split, it's not holding back any water. You guessed it, replace it now.

Inside storm windows work very well. If you do not like the look of the plastic "shrink wrap" type of interior storm windows, consider magnetic polycarbonate interior storms. They are fastened with magnets and do a really good job of sealing out the cold air and make a big thermal break on the inside, much better than exterior storm windows.

If you already have thermal windows and you are starting to get a clouding filling between the panes, the seal is broken. The window frame does not have to be replaced, just the window, at a fraction of what you'd pay for new windows.

•Paintable Exterior Surfaces: If the exterior paint job is starting to look worn, weathered, cracked, crazed, crumbly, now is the perfect time to paint. Remember,

60% of the job is pre-paint preparation. Scrapping, washing with TSP, and rinsing thoroughly, are very vital to the success of your paint job.

The other part is the paint, itself. Don't skimp on the paint. Don't buy by price, buy by features, by reputation. Buy by performance. Ladle the paint on like you are icing a cake. Don't try to stretch the paint. The paint must be at least five mills thick when it is dry for the paint to do its job, so you can stay off the ladder. Most importantly, so you can brag about the results.

•Caulking: All those irritating drafts are due to bad windows or dried up caulking joints. If the windows are fine, it is the caulking. Remember, if an ant can get in your house, the wind and cold can get in big time. Acrylic caulks, Urethane caulks, High Performance caulks work best. Read the instructions. Remember, any crack over a half-inch wide is considered an architectural gap and a backer rod must be used first before you caulk it. That will make that caulking last a long time.

•Concrete Cracks: You can fill in the small cracks (smaller than 1/2" wide) with a product called Gray Crack Seal by Quikrete. It's like putty to use, it extrudes like mustard, and dries rapidly but stays firm and flexible. One of the great things about it is that it's gray and does not look like new concrete, but blends in very well.

What about the expansion joints between the cement slabs? If they have

weathered away, now is the time to fix them. Use an ice scrapper blade or the toe of a shovel, to clean them out as best you can, then back fill with sweeping sand or masonry sand. Pack it down to leave about 1/2" from the surface of the concrete slab. Lay a backer rod on top of the sand, then pour a very special compound called Alco Guard. It is ready to use, apply two thin coats. This will give you a nice black seal.

If the opening is very large, you can replace it with a new expansion joint that you can purchase at any masonry supply house.

•Cement and Concrete Surface Protection: Winter is the worst time for cement wear because of the freeze and thaw cycling of the water and the air temperatures, the snow and the ice. You can seal all concrete areas, walkways, driveways, etc., with a water seal.

•Garage Floors: This is also a great time to thoroughly scrub and clean a raw, unpainted garage floor. Use a water base acrylic cement sealer on the garage floor. Rolling on two coats will give your garage floor great protection from all those road salts, rust and oil stains your car tracks in during the winter.

•Calcium Chloride: Winter is coming, so is ice. You know that you are going to need to melt the ice on sidewalks, stairs and driveways. Go to the store and pick up Calcium Chloride in flake or pellet form.

The pellet gives more traction, but the flake is a lot less expensive; both work a lot better than rock salt.

•Locks and Hinges: Clean and lubricate all door locks and hinges with powdered graphite. Do it now, not when the first freezing rain happens. While you're at it, how about the locks and hinges on the cars?

•Thresholds: Door thresholds have gotten out of adjustment over the summer and will let in a tremendous amount of cold drafts this winter. Most threshold plates are adjustable, simply loosen the screws at the top of the threshold to realign for a perfect fit. If not adjustable, there are vinyl and brush type sweeps that can be attached to the door to give it that tight weather proof seal. Be sure you do this to all exterior doors, not just the front.

•Household Pests: If birds, squirrels or chipmunks have taken up residency in your attic, get them out NOW! They can do a lot of damage during the winter.

An easy way to drive most pests away is to take a shallow pan, two quarts of ammonia, and a roll of toilet paper up to the attic. Pour the ammonia inside the pan. The ammonia will soak into the toilet paper and send that beautiful odor throughout the attic. No self-respecting critter will put up with a smell like that.

When your premises have been vacated, seal any holes with an insulating foam, like Great Stuff®, and re-screen vents with fiberglass screening. **See Tips, 8**

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