

Use checklist to help prepare for winter

Q: I never seem to be prepared for the season changes. The first snow arrives and I realize my son doesn't have boots that fit. There is so much I need to do to manage my home. I need help!

A: You will actually save time and reduce stress in your life if you plan ahead.

A written plan will help you complete necessary tasks. It is hard to find the right size boots or a sled the day of a huge winter storm.

Use this written checklist to prepare for the change in seasons.

Make sure you complete and check the areas that are most important to you.

WINTER CHECKLIST

Change your furnace filter monthly. Your furnace will last longer and your house will stay cleaner. A clean filter will catch unnecessary dirt that would sweep through your house.

Unhook your outside hoses from faucets. Drain the hose and hang it on a hook in your garage.

Drain garage sinks to prevent water from freezing in the pipes.

Check your house for drafts by windows and doors. Add weather stripping where it is necessary. This will save money on your heating bill.

Wash your windows before the weather gets cold. You will enjoy clean windows during the winter months as



Domestic Planner
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you look outside.

Move your summer clothes to a less convenient location to make room for winter clothing.

If you have ample closet and dresser space in each person's room, just rearrange the closet. If you are short on space, you may need to store off-season clothing in storage containers in your basement.

Match your mittens and gloves. Clip pairs together with a clothespin.

Divide gloves, mittens, hats and scarves into baskets. Assign each family member his or her own basket; or put all the mittens into one basket, hats into a different basket, and so on.

This is also a good time to make sure everyone's boots fit.

Organize and clean the garage. Hang items such as shovels, rakes and ladders. Limit the amount of objects on the floor so you can easily sweep out salt and dirty melted snow.

Here is a tip to clean out dirty slushy snow in the cold winter months: Shovel in a little clean snow and it will absorb salt and dirty wet snow.

Push everything out with a shovel.

Don't throw a bucket of water on the dirty snow or you will create an ice skating rink in your garage.

Create an emergency kit in case you lose electricity or a natural disaster occurs. Your kit should include bottled water, non-perishable food, a first aid kit, flashlights, batteries, candles, matches and a radio.

Prepare to put your holiday lights up early on a sunny day instead of a day with temperatures below freezing.

Make your holiday gift and card list so you can begin shopping and addressing cards.

A jump start will allow you to enjoy the month of December instead of rushing around with holiday preparations at the last minute.

Put any additional tasks on the checklist to help you prepare for the season change. As you check each item off you will feel more prepared and less stressed.

Today's refrigerator bulletin: "The squirrel that gathers his food in the fall won't be hungry in the winter!"

Diana Koenig is a writer, educator, speaker and consultant. Send your questions and success stories to: Diana Koenig, P.O. Box 1702, Manchester, MO 63011, or e-mail diana@koenig.com. Her Web site is www.domesticplanner.com.

Little things can mean big fix-it project

You have read it here in this column several times that I do not for a moment believe that major home appliances are built today with the concept of long life.

Every appliance service industry magazine and newspaper write with a very negative overtone on life expectancy of a major home appliance.

The older appliance repair technicians in this country are appalled at the engineering quality of certain components put into our products, which we buy at increased prices and expect to last as long as the previous one we used to own.

Let me take the washer you have in the laundry room and give you an idea of what I mean about the past and present. Take a bolt the size of your little finger (look at your hand that is holding this newspaper for comparison).

In years past, if something was left in a pocket of a garment that fit that size, it could travel through a wash load and through the spin cycle and end up in the laundry tub.

You have to remember that a clothes washer has a pump that is used to expel the water, and there are no screens to prevent these kinds of items from going into the pump. In today's clothes washers, some of these machines have pumps that can be jammed with something as small as a wood-encatch.

Now, that's quite the comparison, isn't it? It means you have to pay special attention to making sure that the pockets are emptied before anything is placed in the wash load.

The older machines had a belt-driven pump, while today many have a low-voltage electric motor pump. A jammed impeller on a pump today can cause the motor to burn out. This necessitates in many cases the need of a service technician and a cost exceeding \$100.



Appliance Doctor
Joe Gagnon

The older appliance repair technicians in this country are appalled at the engineering quality of certain components put into our products, which we buy at increased prices and expect to last as long as the previous one we used to own.

All in all, you as a consumer must be more diligent than ever in making sure you don't create this problem.

A few years ago when you bought a certain brand of washer you were instructed to use only a certain kind of detergent. Naturally some of this detergent was included in the sale of the washer, and if in the future you changed brands, the service technician was knocking on your door to change the pump.

It appears that certain soaps can cause a gritting action on the pump impeller and cause it to jam. Until this certain manufacturer changed the design of the pump, there were many replacements. I sure kept the service industry busy.

DO IT YOURSELF?

As for the do-it-yourselfer, things have changed as well. I get calls from homeowners all the time who inquire about how they can fix their own washer. ("Hey, Doc, I fixed my own washer for 20 years and on this new one I can't even figure out how to get to the blooming pump.")

Well, it's sort of like trying to put together something you bought the kids for Christmas. You spend an hour on a five-minute job, and in your own personal frustration you might even think about selling the children. I think the appliance manufacturers hire a scientist to put a washer together. They put screws and clips where you can't see them unless you pop off a certain piece of chrome.

You don't know that the piece of chrome pops off, unless someone tells you.

When you finally get to the screws, you've never seen a screw head like this one because it's a special screw, and even the hardware store doesn't have a screwdriver to fit it.

You take off all the screws that hold on the back panel and the panel still won't come off, and you sit there in amazement and wonder how this thing was put together.

You get even angrier when you have to call for service, and the technician - with you looking over his or her shoulder - takes the washer apart in less than two minutes.

Later on you're sitting quietly and wondering why the pump you saw changed looked so cheap compared to the pump you replaced yourself 10 years ago. Why is it that you needed a technician to do it? The answer to this question is a lot easier to figure out than fixing the washer. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WWJ-950 and WXYT-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (248) 455-7281.

Home for Holidays event offers pets to adopt

To help homeless animals find warm and loving new homes, the Michigan Humane Society's Mobile Adoption Unit will bring adoptable dogs, cats, puppies and kittens to Neiman Marcus at the Somerset Collection in Troy for Home for the Holidays, a three-day adoption event, during Thanksgiving weekend.

Adoptable animals will also be featured in the Neiman Marcus window displays.

The Somerset Collection is at Big Beaver Road and Coolidge. The Mobile Adoption Unit will be parked at the Big Beaver Road entrance to Neiman Marcus, on the south side of Big Beaver Road.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 29 and 30, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 1.

The three MHS shelters in Rochester Hills, Westland

and Detroit will have regular adoption hours Friday and Saturday.

For shelter hours or more information about the Home for the Holidays event, call (866) M-HUMANE between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays, or visit www.michiganhumane.org.

The Michigan Humane Society is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to serving animals since 1877.

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