

# Weathering the Home During Cooler Months

“Mr. Fix-It” Lou Manfredini Offers Tips to Prepare the Home for Fall and Winter

Whether you live in Cleveland or Phoenix, fall and winter translate to cooler temperatures outdoors. Homeowners may be pulling out their scarves and mittens and packing away their tank tops and swimsuits in preparation, but how can they also help their homes weather the cold temperatures?

“The chill in the air signifies the time period for getting your home buttoned up for fall and winter,” said Lou Manfredini, host of *HouseSmarts* TV and home improvement contributor on NBC’s *The Today Show*. “Don’t wait until the first snowfall or 30-degree temperatures to think about preparing your home. Old Man Winter can make home inspections and repairs more difficult and costly if you wait too long in the season to tackle them.”

By adapting these do-it-yourself projects from Manfredini, homeowners can help their home weather the fall and winter:

**Attic and Basement:** Moms always say to wear a hat when you go out in the cold to help keep the heat from escaping your body; the same is true for your attic and basement:

Many attics have an access panel which can be another source of drafts. Install weather stripping to the panel so that the foam compresses to help seal out any unwanted air.

Inspect the attic to see if additional insulation is needed. If adding more, make sure that it does not interfere with the attic’s ability to bring in, circulate and dispose of fresh air. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recommendations on its website to help homeowners determine how much insulation is needed based on the home’s location.

The part of the basement where the house meets the foundation can allow outside air to leak in. Use an expanding foam insulation to fill the gaps. It is important to remember that the foam can sometimes expand three to five times larger than the initial bead you squirt, so be sure to test it first.

**Furnace:** Just as you swap out the clothes in your closet to prepare for the cool months, you need to pay the same attention to your heating and cooling system:

Check your ductwork annually to ensure that it is tight and not leaking air. Faulty systems can allow dirt and debris to enter the ductwork and be spread around your home.

It’s important to change your furnace filter every three months. A good way to remember this is to change the filter at the start of every season.

Upgrade to a high performance filter, such as a Filtrete Elite Allergen Reduction Filter from 3M, to help capture up to 94 percent of the large airborne particles from the air passing through the filter.

High performance filters also help maintain airflow in heating and cooling systems, which may help prevent stress on the system and reduce the amount of energy needed to reach desired indoor air temperatures.

**Windows and Doors:** Don’t just pile on layers to your wardrobe; the home needs extra protection, too:

Windows and doors – even brand new ones – are the greatest areas of heat loss in the home. Adding weather stripping will not only help with drafts but will also help homeowners conserve energy during the cooler months. Door sweeps are an inexpensive way to help prevent outdoor air from seeping through the bottoms of doors and into the home.

Let the sun be your guide – it’s free energy. Open up drapes and blinds, and let that sun heat your home during the day. At night, draw the curtains closed to keep the heat inside.

**Garage and Fireplace:** People aren’t the only ones searching for warmth during cool months:

Check the seal under your garage door. This rubber gasket can decay over time but is easy to replace. It can help keep out the cool air and other outdoor elements.

Inspect the damper on the fireplace to ensure it is in good working order to help prevent heat loss when the fireplace is not being used. Also remember to close it when the fireplace is not in use.

When storing firewood, make sure it's away from the house. Mice will be looking to find a nice warm place to stay during the cooler months.

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#### About Lou Manfredini

Lou Manfredini has been a professional homebuilder and remodeler for over 25 years. Manfredini began his media career when WGN-AM Radio 720 Chicago launched his idea of a home improvement call-in radio show. Today, 15 years later the show, *Ask Mr. Fix-It*, is the number one Saturday morning radio program in Chicago. Manfredini also hosts and co-produces a nationally syndicated television and radio show called *HouseSmarts* and radio segments called *House Smarts Minutes*. He is a regular contributor to NBC's *Today Show* and has authored five successful home improvement books for homeowners who want to understand how their homes work.

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