



The Top Five Winterizing Steps:

- 1) Repair and/or replace weather stripping and door sweeps
- 2) Ensure your gutters are properly pitched so water goes where you want it to. Typically this is 1/8" per foot.
- 3) Check the attic for holes or gaps. Look for black stains on insulation or obvious light or rain getting in. While you're in the attic, check the insulation level, if you can see the top of the joists you need more.
- 4) Fix cracks in concrete including driveways, steps and paths. Water can get in, freeze and then expand which will cause bigger problems.
- 5) Clean and store your cooling devices including A/C.

Winterizing on the West Coast

Many home owners are aware of common tasks to take on in the fall such as clearing out the gutters, raking leaves away from the foundation and draining and shutting off exterior water lines. In Vancouver in particular, keeping moisture out is the number one priority. Because the west coast sees so much rain, exterior finishes often take a beating, so keeping paint in good shape and repairing exterior issues quickly will help ensure a small problem doesn't become a much larger one.

There are other things that homeowners can do at the same time that will help maintain the systems and functions of the home. While doing these routine check-ups you can also be looking for worn floors, signs of roof damage or leaks on the ceilings, cracks in the foundation, or breaks in the sealants around plumbing fixtures that may need replacing. This way you can either remedy these issues immediately, or start making plans to address them in spring.

- Clean or replace filters in heating and cooling systems and vacuum any accessible parts to remove built up dust or dirt. This includes the exterior housing. If you have a dehumidifier, you can check it for dirt and debris at the same time.
- Remove debris build-up from your foundation and drain pipes. At the same time, check the walls for signs of animals, rodents or insects who will be seeking warmth at this time of year. You can also place river rock around your foundation walls which can deter smaller critters from nesting against your home.
- Draw the sediment out of your water heater by draining approximately 1 gallon of water. While drawing the water check the temperature gauge, which should be around 140 degrees F or 120 degrees F if your dishwasher has its own heating element.
- Trip the main electrical switch of your home to prevent corrosion build-up. Make sure to unplug electronics first.
- Replace or install weather stripping around windows and doors. While you are working check for soft patches in the wood, cracked glass or damage to the screens. If you are installing storm windows, check these for similar issues at the same time.

"The national (U.S) statistic on the Cash Value of Home Maintenance states, for every \$1 that is spent on maintenance, up to \$100 of repairs are avoided." - www.thisoldhouse.com



Is your home historically significant?

When a home or building is recognized as significant either for its architecture, its history, or its connection to the city's history it is all the more important to maintain original materials and elements. Here are extra precautions to consider if your home is historically significant:

- Understand its significance including heritage components and elements. The best way to do this is to commission a professionally drafted Statement of Significance or research to see if one has already been done.
- Formulate an appropriate maintenance program with the help of a heritage consultant.
- Following suggested guidelines, embark on a regular and informed inspection of building fabric, and repair or restore as necessary.

For more information on designated heritage homes visit the [Heritage Information](#) section of our website.

Creating a Maintenance Plan

Preventative maintenance performed on a regular schedule is the most beneficial for all homes, but in particular character and heritage homes. It is important to remember with heritage and character homes that older systems and construction methods are not always best replaced or made new. Older construction, heating and cooling methods worked differently than new methods, and in some cases are more efficient and less expensive to repair or maintain. It is best practice to investigate and understand the methodology behind your home's construction, before attempting to intervene. VHF offers Old School Workshop and Courses which can be a great way to learn about older homes. When in doubt, consider hiring a heritage consultant to advise.

Create a Maintenance Check List

One of the most useful tools will be a maintenance check list. Whether you enlist a heritage consultant to draft your list or create your own, a check list will break down a seemingly daunting list of tasks to annual, semi-annual and monthly tasks. By regularly inspecting your home during

maintenance checks, you are able to take note of potential larger projects before they become an immediate concern.

A comprehensive list for conducting your own yearly home inspection can be found on our website. VHF suggests breaking it down into monthly tasks to make the list more manageable.

For Further Education

There are many resources presented on energy efficiency and making older homes more affordable. Some, despite good intentions, can result in advice that is not the best for character and heritage, which is unique from the over-arching theme of "older home". Be aware of any article or resource that encourages removal of character elements, such as windows, wood-burning fireplaces, or ventilation systems without discussing options for improvement with retention. Below are a couple of starter resources that VHF found helpful.

- [VHF's Green Guide](#): New Life for Old Buildings offers tips for making heritage buildings more sustainable.
- The [Canada Home Builder Report](#)

on Wood Window Restoration speaks to the science behind restoring wood windows.

- There are also a number of [Technical Pamphlets](#) available on our website. Scroll to the bottom of the page to find the pdf's.
- The *Reader's Digest New Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual* from 1991 is an excellent comprehensive guide with tips, advice and how-to instructions for many of the home maintenance tasks one is likely to come across. It includes the simplest tasks that anyone can do, while in-depth instructions will also make it clear which jobs you may want to hire someone to take care of.

Please note that all the above information offers suggestions only. Every building is different and any project may require the expert advice of a hired professional. Exercise caution when taking on any maintenance tasks including proper safety equipment and appropriate tools. Electrical work should always be handled by a certified electrician.

VHF granting opportunities

To help with exterior restoration projects and improving energy efficiency VHF offers five different grants to help maintain and restore homes. Quotes and support documentation are required as part of the application so its a good idea to start gathering information early. For more information on application deadlines, the types of grants we offer, information for applying and to download the application form, visit the [Get a Grant](#) page of our website.