As a tenant, you know that preventative maintenance is essential to keeping your property in good condition — and it's even more important when you own or manage a rental property. Your landlords can't be expected to stay on top of all the home repair and maintenance tasks, so there are several items you should check off your preventative management to-do list before winter sets in.

1. Check up on the heating and insulation system

In the cold climate, the heating system will be running constantly during winter. Now is the time to schedule a furnace or HVAC cleaning and tune-up, change or clean the filter, and check the condition of your crawlspace and attic.

If your rental property has a fireplace, have it cleaned and make sure the flue is functioning properly. If you can't think of the last time the chimney was swept, it's probably time to call in the pros — don't let a crackling fire turn into a fire hazard.

Insulation in the crawlspace and ceilings will keep the heat inside the living space and prevent warm air from escaping. Repair or cover any openings or holes under the eaves that could allow rodents to take refuge in a cozy attic. Use weather stripping or caulk to seal gaps around windows and doors — this will improve energy efficiency in your property, whether it's hot or cold air you're trying to keep out.



2. Prevent frozen pipes

Avoid frozen pipes this season — and all the collateral damage they can cause — by adding extra insulation to exposed pipes in the crawlspace, basement or attic. Damage due to frozen pipes is common but completely preventable. Exterior faucets and hoses should be drained and shut off. Educate yourselves about what you need to do when the temperature drops, such as leaving a trickle of water on overnight, leaving cabinet doors open and keeping the thermostat at a consistent temperature.

3. Keep branches at bay

Your landscaping may have gone dormant, but you're not done with yardwork yet. Prevent damage from icy or gusty conditions by trimming trees and shrubs that are brushing up against the walls or windows, and check for dead branches that could be susceptible to falling during a windstorm.

4. Winter-proof the exterior

Regularly inspect your roof for the formation of ice dams, which can compromise your roof and cause water leakage. Look for damaged shingles or flashing, close any crawlspace vents in the foundation and seal any cracks that could allow small critters to burrow in.

While you're thinking about concrete, check the walkways and driveway for cracks — and repair them while the weather is still dry — to reduce the potential for falls on your property.

5. Clean the gutters



It's a dirty job, but putting it off can result in water damage, clogs and a bigger mess come spring. Check downspouts for cracks or split seams and be sure they drain away from the foundation. Use extensions or splash backs to prevent water from seeping into the crawlspace or basement.

6. Inspect your deck and fencing

Wood is susceptible to deterioration in any climate. Check boards for rot or signs of insect damage, secure any loose steps or railings, and consider using a non-slip paint or epoxy to keep your deck, porch and stairs slip-resistant in wet conditions. Repair or replace damaged or missing fence pickets and make sure posts are secure — a windstorm can easily knock down loose fencing.

7. Test safety devices

The end of daylight saving time serves as a natural reminder to test all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in the home and replace the batteries — especially since you will be using your fireplaces as the weather cools.

8. Be prepared



A bad storm can result in a blackout or being snowed in. If your association is taking care of snow removal on your property, move snow shovels and blowers to an accessible spot.

Remind yourselves to be prepared for power outages by keeping bottled water, non-perishable food, flashlights and emergency phone numbers on hand.