

Angie's list<sup>®</sup>  
WINTER MAINTENANCE  
GUIDE  
INTERIOR PROJECTS



# INTERIOR PROJECTS



# interior projects

## chimneys

If you use a fireplace it's important to have a [professional clean the chimney](#) at least every two years to prevent buildup of creosote, which can lead to a chimney fire that can spread quickly and destroy a home. The average cost of a chimney sweep and inspection is \$178, according to recent reviews by Angie's List members. Keep your family and home safe from fire dangers by following fireplace safety recommendations. Even a gas fireplace should be inspected regularly for leaks or other performance issues.

## housecleaning

Whether you're hosting a party that requires a little extra prep, or the shopping and traveling are taking up more time than you have available, consider [hiring a house cleaning service](#) for the holidays. A good house cleaner can do everything from offering a deep cleaning of floors, walls and appliances to helping you prepare a room with fresh bedding and clean closet space for out-of-town guests.



### CARPET CLEANING

If you're hosting holiday festivities or it's just time to undo the dirt left behind from summer and fall foot traffic, consider [hiring a carpet cleaning service](#) this season.

# HVAC CHECKLIST

Experts recommend a professional inspection and servicing of your heating system before you need it. Having an annual inspection can keep your furnace in good working order and prevent it from failing during the coldest temperatures.

### ENERGY AUDIT

If you're experiencing uneven heating during the winter – where one floor or area of the home is considerably warmer or colder than another – consider hiring a home [energy audit professional](#) or qualified heating and cooling professional who can diagnose potential problems and offer solutions.

### HEATING OPTIONS

There are many efficient heating options available from two-stage furnaces to heat pumps to geothermal heating units, if you need to replace your furnace this year.

Be sure to shop around and consult with highly rated HVAC pros on Angie's List to ensure you find one that's sized properly to sufficiently heat your home.

### DUCTWORK

Finally, check your ductwork to ensure it's sealed at joints and intersections to prevent heated air from leaking. Air that seeps from supply ductwork can allow heated air into the attic or crawl space where it's not needed. Plus, outside air can be drawn into the return ductwork. This increases your heating costs and reduces indoor comfort. Experts recommend sealing ducts using foil-backed tape or silicone caulking.

### GET AN INSPECTION

Industry experts have told us that the majority of their emergency, "no-heat" calls are related to a lack of [maintenance of the HVAC system](#). An inspection can also detect a potential health hazard in a carbon monoxide leak.

### CHANGE FILTERS

One key to maintaining your HVAC system is to regularly change your filters. Dirty filters are a primary reason heating systems fail in the winter. Changing your filter will also help your system operate more efficiently, thereby reducing your energy costs. Moreover, a clean filter means improved indoor air quality.

### MAINTENANCE PLAN

Getting on an annual preventive maintenance plan with a trusted heating and cooling contractor can offer a number of benefits, including a tune-up of both systems, priority service should you need it, discounted parts and payment options.



#### SHOP HVAC OFFERS

Or visit [AngiesList.com/WinterOffers](https://www.AngiesList.com/WinterOffers)

# plumbing CHECKLIST

The most common plumbing emergency in cold-weather areas is when water freezes in pipes, causing them to burst. Plumbing experts say pipes are susceptible to freeze damage when temperatures drop below 20 degrees, unless you winterize them. A burst pipe in the exterior wall of a home can be disastrous and cause thousands of dollars in damage to walls, floors, ceilings and furniture.

### INSULATE PIPES

Adding a thick layer of pipe insulation around exposed pipes can help prevent them from freezing. Measure your pipes first and find the appropriate-size foam tube at your local hardware store. The tube has a slit to allow it to fit over pipes, but you may need to cut it down to fit the length. Secure with duct tape if it doesn't have self-adhering edges.

Pipes that are in unheated areas are the most likely to freeze, while pipes that have frozen previously are more susceptible to damage. Adding heat tape to these pipes before insulating them, by following the manufacturer's instructions, can offer an extra layer of protection.

### OPEN CABINET DOORS

Open cabinet doors below kitchen and bathroom sinks to allow warm air in to circulate. Be sure to clear out any safety hazards from open cabinets that small children could access.

### FIND SHUT-OFF VALVE

If you're leaving your home for an extended period, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve.

### SEAL CRAWL SPACE

If you have a crawl space, close the vents or install foam board insulation to cover them and seal them off to prevent cold air from entering.

### DRAIN WATER HEATER

Drain and flush your hot water heater to ensure it's operating at peak efficiency during winter weather.



### LET FAUCETS DRIP

Turn on water at faucets located along exterior walls overnight or during days when the temperatures drop below freezing to create a slow, steady drip. That will eliminate pressure that can build between the faucet and an ice blockage, so even if the pipe freezes, it's less likely to burst. Never try to [thaw a frozen pipe](#) with an open flame. Try using a hand-held hair dryer at its lowest setting, but never use near water to avoid electrocution. Be prepared to shut off the main water line if you discover a break in a pipe.

### CHECK SUMP PUMP

Test your sump pump regularly to ensure it's operating properly. Sump pump discharge lines can freeze, which can cause the pump to run continuously until the motor burns out. A failed sump pump could lead to a basement flood.



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# INTERIOR PROJECTS



## kitchen cabinet refacing

Winter is a great time of year to take on indoor remodeling projects. Many remodeling companies see a slowdown in traffic, meaning their schedules open up more and they may be more willing to negotiate costs on certain jobs. One project that offers a good return on your investment is refacing your kitchen cabinets. [Refacing can save](#) between 30 and 50 percent of the cost of replacement, while giving your cabinets a new look. With refacing you can change the type of wood, finish and door design of your cabinets by replacing only the doors, drawer fronts and hardware, while leaving the cabinet boxes in place.



## LED lighting

Though they cost more, light-emitting diodes differ from incandescent bulbs in that they're almost never hot to the touch, they use about 75 percent less energy and last nearly twice as long. [LED bulbs](#) are also a popular option for both interior and exterior holiday lights.



## wallpaper

Another home improvement project that is ideal for winter is to give your walls a face-lift. Painting is one simple and inexpensive way to spruce up your interior, but [adding wallpaper](#) is another option that is making a comeback. This isn't your grandma's wallpaper, either. Today's wallpaper trends include adding bold colors and texture to walls to reflect your personality

Photos ©Thinkstock; courtesy of Brewster Home Fashions (bottom right)

## INTERIOR PROJECTS

# electrical

Whether it's because of overloading holiday lights or connecting a space heater to an extension cord, studies have shown that most electrical fires in the home occur during December and January.

Electricians recommend against using extension cords and heavy-duty equipment on general-purpose plugs, which can overload a single circuit breaker. If you have older wiring, consider having a professional, licensed electrician inspect and update your electrical system where necessary. Installing an arc fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) or ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection in homes that don't have them can minimize the risk of electrical fires, electricians say.



# handymen

Spring is often the time of year we think about doing home improvement projects, but as repair work slows down in the winter, many handymen and handywomen have more availability in their schedules and are willing to take on additional projects during the winter months.

Consider [hiring a handyman](#) to paint, do some remodeling or renovation work, make repairs to light fixtures, or weatherize drafty doors and windows. Be sure to first consider the project, qualifications and any professional licensing the job requires.



# house sitting

If you're traveling for the winter, consider hiring a house sitter to keep an eye on your home while you're away. For a small fee, a house sitter can bring in mail, water plants, feed and water pets and adjust lighting and window treatments to give the home a lived-in look.

If you're leaving your vacation home or primary residence for the season, be sure to take the necessary steps to winterize your home. This should include adjusting the thermostat to 50-55 degrees to keep pipes from freezing, shutting off the water at the main valve, turning off the gas line to prevent a leak, adding storm windows and doors if necessary, unplugging unused appliances, arming your [home security system](#) and notifying neighbors of your departure.

Photo by Katelin Kinney (top); Bradon Smith (bottom)