

Wellfleet Fire Department



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Off-season recommendations for homeowners

1. Shut down your main water supply, even if you leave your heat on.
 - a. If you can, close the main water valve.
 - b. Alternatively, turn off power to the pump, either at the service switch for the pump or at the breaker panel. This will prevent the pump from running and flooding the house in case of a plumbing break or freeze-up.
2. If you leave your house heated, make sure your heating system is serviced regularly and working properly. Don't set the thermostat lower than 55 degrees. Use automatic delivery for oil or propane to ensure that you don't run out of fuel. Remember that most heating systems require electricity. You shouldn't depend on the heating system to prevent a freeze-up, as an extended power failure might leave your house vulnerable to freezing.
3. If you don't leave your house heated, be sure to properly drain all plumbing lines and fixtures. If you heat with propane, turn off the gas supply at the tank(s). If you're not sure how to do these things, hire a professional caretaker or plumber to turn off the gas and drain your house.
4. Ensure that storm doors and window screens are securely latched. Put away yard furniture, grills and other items which could blow around to minimize the chance of wind damage.
Do not store propane cylinders indoors.
5. If you have roof gutters, make sure they're clean so water will be carried away from the house.
6. Prune limbs which overhang your house and incoming power lines to reduce the potential of damage from wind and ice. Clear trees and brush from your driveway to a minimum of 14' wide by 14' high to allow unimpeded passage for emergency vehicles. Information on road and driveway clearing can be found at the Wellfleet Fire Department web site (www.wellfleetfire.com) under the fire prevention section.
7. Make sure your house numbers are accurate and visible, as required by state and town laws. The fire prevention section of the Fire Department's web site has more information on house numbering requirements.
8. Close interior doors. In case of a fire, closing interior doors will slow down the spread of a fire.

9. Unplug appliances, especially those which generate heat (toasters, coffee makers, irons, etc.).
10. Unplug computers, TV's, stereo systems, etc. to protect them from power surges.
11. Unplug unnecessary power transformers (small black boxes used for cell phone chargers, battery chargers, etc). In addition to using small amounts of electricity, these can fail and overheat and they can be affected by power surges.
12. Don't leave magnifying mirrors or magnifying glasses where they could receive direct sunlight. There have been instances of fires started by sunlight reflected and concentrated by magnifying mirrors and magnifying glasses.
13. Don't leave any rags used for finishing indoors or in trash containers. Rags used for stain, varnish or oil finishing should be soaked in water and hung outdoors to dry.
14. Insure that your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are working and have fresh batteries. Even if no one is at home, these alarms might make enough noise that a neighbor or passer-by might hear the alarm in the event of a fire.
15. Consider installing a monitored alarm system. These systems provide the best chance at early detection of a fire, and may also lower your insurance premiums. They can also monitor your home for break-ins.
16. Consider installing a lock-box. This is a secure hardened box bolted to your house which holds your house keys, and enables the fire department to access your home in case of an emergency. If you have a monitored alarm system, installation of a lock-box is required by town bylaw.
17. Consider hiring a caretaker to check on your house. Houses should be checked weekly at a minimum. A good caretaker will do more than just drive by the house. He or she should go into the house and check for potential problems.
18. If you don't use a caretaker, try to find one or more neighbors who will be here throughout the off-season and who are willing to keep an eye on your property. They should have a key to the house or know where one is hidden, and they should know how to contact you quickly.
19. Consider installing a residential sprinkler system. These systems can be installed for about the equivalent price of high quality wall-to-wall carpeting and they provide excellent fire protection, as well as potential insurance savings. For more information on residential sprinklers, go to the Wellfleet Fire Department web site and look under the fire prevention link. In addition, here are some links to national organizations promoting home fire sprinklers:

<http://www.homefiresprinkler.org/>

<http://www.residentialfiresprinklers.com/blog/firesafety/>

http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/all_citizens/home_fire_prev/sprinklers/