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ASK THE EXPERT

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How should people prepare their houses for sale during the winter?

A bit of simple maintenance now will go a long way to keep a house in good shape for prospective buyers this winter.

Start by clearing leaves from gutters and patios. Keep walking areas swept and collect lawn debris regularly. Remember to check working fireplaces for loose mortar and debris. Get heating systems inspected. Stock up on filters for timely changes throughout the winter. Replacing window

screens with storm windows will cut heating costs and extend the life of the screen material.

Don't overlook the driveway. Snow, ice and salt that come with the winter season can wreak havoc on driveways and blacktop surfaces. Protect them by filling cracks and holes before the freeze sets in. Snow can alter the overall look of the property. Shovel and de-ice paths and doorways. The driveway and sidewalks should be plowed. Make sure that outside lights and doorbells work. Consider installing more lights to

highlight effectively the best areas of the house.

Focusing on the interior is also important for selling in the winter. Furnished homes and those that are well organized have more appeal. Make sure beds are made, furniture is well placed and that countertops and closets are clutter-free. Bear in mind that not all home shoppers celebrate the same holidays. Keep holiday decorations as a seasonal accent so buyers see the home, not just the adornments.

Selling a home in the winter has its perks. Chances are, buyers looking for a home during the winter holidays are serious about buying and not simply shopping around. At that time of year, there are fewer homes on the market, reducing the competition.

