



Fall and Winter Homecare Tips

Dear Newmark Homeowner,

Congratulations on the purchase of your home, we hope that your home has been everything that you dreamed it would be. With the fall and winter months fast approaching, there are some basic homecare tips that we would like to share with you. As the saying goes “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, therefore we would like to take the time to run through some tips that might save you from headaches and stress this winter.

In the home:

Prestart your heating system prior to the temperature dropping: The heat exchanger comes coated with oil from the manufacture and will set off the smoke detectors when the heater is first started. It is best to open your windows and start the heater so that the oil will burn off and the smoke alarms will not be activated by the smoke. It also helps to assure that the heater will work when needed.

*It is recommended that maintenance be performed on the heating and air conditioning system on a regular basis. The company that installed your unit is able to set up a maintenance program with you, or do individual maintenance if you so choose.

Exhaust systems to help minimize humidity: Due to the humidity trapped inside your new home, condensation will form on the window frames during winter when the temperature difference from inside to outside is drastic. Running the following items will help reduce the humidity and will eventually lessen the amount of condensation that forms; vent hood above the cook top, exhaust fans in the utility room while drying clothes, exhaust fans above the showers and tubs for at least 20 minutes after a bath or shower.

Fireplace Start-up: In case that you have turned the gas valve to the fireplace off during the summer time, your pilot light will not be on and will have to be ignited prior to using the switch on the wall that turns the fireplace on and off. The igniter and the pilot lighting mechanism is located either inside of the base of the fireplace or underneath the fireplace depending on the model that is in your home. The damper above the opening of the fireplace should be to the open position so that the flame will come on. If your fireplace comes with glass doors that open, do not operate the fireplace with the doors closed, this will build up heat and trip the flame sensor and will cause it to malfunction. If your fireplace has fixed glass covering the fireplace it is normal to operate it with the fixed glass in place.

Dual system homes: Homes with dual AC systems should be set differently during the winter months to help maximize their efficiency. Since heat rises the upstairs unit should be set at a few degrees lower than the downstairs unit.

Exterior of the home:

Sprinkler System adjustments and timing: During fall weather and daily temperatures topping out at low to mid 80s, the sprinkler system will need to be adjusted to run less than it did during the peak times in summer. During the fall and winter months water from your system will take longer to evaporate especially on overcast days. The ground will only absorb so much water and the rest will run off into the street sewer. Over watering during cooler weather leads to “brown patch”, brown circles on your lawn that will cause your grass to die.

Sprinkler System freeze protection: With the temperatures dropping below the freezing mark occasionally during the winter months, it is necessary to protect certain parts of the sprinkler system that are exposed to the winter elements. One part in particular is the back flow preventer that rises about 2 feet above the ground on the side of the house where the water cut off valve is located for the home and the sprinkler system. This back flow valve has a bronze colored dome shaped top that if left unprotected will freeze, crack and malfunction once the temperature rises above the freezing mark. It should be drained to avoid freezing water to remain in the pipes and wrapped to avoid any damage to the internal parts.

It is also important to ensure that if your yard has drains to clean around these areas to allow for proper water flow and drainage.

The Four Ps: Winter weather creates conditions that are not favorable for many people that are not used to extreme climates. Perhaps you have moved to the Houston area from somewhere that the weather was generally always warm or had mild winters. The temperatures in the Greater Houston Metropolitan area are no comparison to the frigid temperatures up north but will on some occasions drop low enough to where it is advised to protect People, Pets, Pipes and Plants around the home. Remember to wrap all exposed pipes and faucets on the sides of your home including the main water cut off on the side of your home. Cover any freeze sensitive plants during freezing weather conditions. Do not leave your pets exposed to the elements and bundle up on those cold days and nights if you have to venture out into the cold.