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## Protect Your Home from Severe Winter Weather

Winter brings its own share of severe weather. With a little planning, you can avoid some of the problems that winter weather can bring to your home and keep your family safe.

Here are five things to do before the onset of winter to prepare for the storm season to come:

1. **Trim nearby trees and branches** — Identify trees and branches that may be potential hazards to your property and your family's safety.
2. **Clean out your gutters** — Clogged gutters may cause ice dams to form on your roof. Ice dams can direct water way from the gutters and under the shingles, causing water to drip into your home.
3. **Inspect your sump pump system** — Protect your basement from flooding by ensuring that all pump components are operating correctly, that drains are clear and properly installed, and that your pump is powerful enough to do the job.
4. **Have your heating system inspected by a qualified technician** — Make sure he checks the operation of your furnace or boiler as well as your chimney and/or fuel piping.
5. **Have a backup plan for long power outages** — Pack an emergency kit with the essentials needed to get through an outage. Consider a portable or standby/whole house generator system to get you through any outages that occur throughout the season. Be sure you have the necessary fuel (extra propane cylinders or a full propane tank) in case you need to switch to generator power.