

A to-do list for when the clocks turn back



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**PROPERTY
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One of the benefits — some may argue only benefit — of the coming cooler weather, is the gaining of that precious hour when the clocks fall back November 1 and daylight savings comes to an end.

But if you're a homeowner, and certainly as a landlord or property manager, there's work to do this time of year to properly winterize your property.

So sleep in November 1, and sleep off the Halloween revelry absolutely, but when you rise make it a priority to check the functionality of all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors as well as change their batteries.

After all, winter is the prime season for house fires. It's in the winter that we all try to cozy up our spaces to stay warm.

When you consider that it's the season for space heaters, the lighting of holiday candles and Christmas lights inside and out, as well as getting a roaring fire going in the hearth, it starts to become clear why fires suddenly spike.

But would you be surprised to learn that while yes, these contribute to the rise, the majority of winter house fires are actually electrical in nature?

And of course with longer, colder nights we use our lighting and heating systems near continuously, increasing the likelihood of something going wrong.

Properly maintaining smoke and monoxide detectors is an easy and cheap safety technique that saves lives. It's that simple.

While you're in your rental property checking on smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, check fire extinguishers too to ensure they haven't yet expired.

Also take the opportunity to make sure the furnace is in good working order and that its filters are clean. This is a great time to call in a technician for preventative maintenance.

If your unit or building's heating system goes down in the middle of winter, water damage can happen fast if its cold enough to cause your pipes to freeze and burst.

If applicable, bleed the radiators to ensure hot water will reach the top floors. Remember an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. These tips also ensure your heating system is working as efficiently as possible. This is also a good time to turn off garden water bibs to prevent your pipes from freezing when the temperature really takes a dip.

You'd be amazed how much water damage can occur when one of these babies bursts into a basement. Give the eaves troughs and gutters a good clean too

which will help avoid water damage to your roof and foundation when the spring thaw comes.

Take a look at the porch, the roof, the garage to ensure no little critters have decided to hole up for the winter. Raccoons, squirrels, and skunks can do an awful lot of damage if they take up residence in your property.

Check in with your tenants about whether they have plans to leave over the holidays. If they will be away, give them some fire prevention tips, like unplugging all non-essential appliances and electronics before they leave.

With these tips hopefully your income property will be safe and ready

for the winter. And hopefully you made excellent use of that extra hour in bed.

— Sabine Ghali is a director at **Buttonwood Property Management** and an entrepreneur who endeavours to help investors create wealth over time. Visit her at www.buttonwood.ca.

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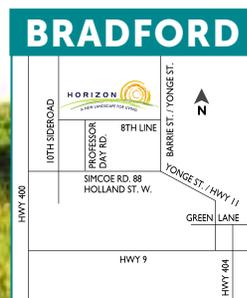
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