



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Winterizing your house can seem more important when a winter storm hits. Ralph Schmidt had time to think about it as he cleared walks during a storm that hit on New Year's Eve last year.

# Winterizing

Cold winds and temperatures might have snuck up on some people this year before they could take appropriate measures to winterize their homes. Making small adjustments in the home can lead to energy savings and lower utility bills through the winter months, according to Bruce Snead, director of Engineering Extension at Kansas State University.

Finding a balance between being comfortable and conserving energy is key, he said. Some main areas of concentration for winterizing the home include checking the furnace, insulation, and the windows, doors and outlets for leaks to the outdoors. But, having a working programmable thermostat might be the first item on the agenda.

"The thermostat setting determines how much you will spend for heating and cooling costs," Snead said. He recommends that people consider setting it down when they don't need it, perhaps when they are sleeping or gone during the day.

"Each house is unique, but generally every degree you drop on your thermostat might save as much as 3 percent on your heating and cooling costs," he said.

### Furnace checks

Snead said that the furnace, whether it is a gas, propane, heat pump or even geothermal heat pump, should be operating at optimum efficiency. This means filters should be regularly replaced or cleaned.

"The more you use the furnace, the more important it is to check it, certainly at least every three months if not more often, just to make sure that the filters are clean," he said. "If you have not had your furnace serviced in two or three years, it would be worth having a service technician do a standard evaluation to make sure everything is still lubricated, operating properly, venting properly and you are getting the most out of the fuel that is being consumed by the furnace to provide comfort in your home."

If people have any combustion appliances, like a furnace, in their home, Snead said they should have a carbon monoxide detector. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, tasteless and colorless gas that can cause flu-like symptoms or even death.

### Windows, doors and outlets

Leaks to the exterior of the home are one of the largest drains on energy costs. Snead said it depends on how many windows the home has, the orientation of those windows, how old they are, how many layers of glass they have and how tight they are.

"Even if you have leaky, old windows, you can always add an interior layer of plastic — a shrink-fit film," Snead said. "Just choose the proper-sized kit for your window. It can be temporarily installed. It's a good way to maintain the clarity of view of the window, but air tightening by literally sealing the whole window at the surface of the trim."

Another option for people is using temporary caulks,

# makes home energy-efficient

Snead said. If the window is not going to be used at all this winter, the temporary caulks don't bond permanently to the surface but will seal around the window.

If the windows are loose-fitting or decaying because of mold, mildew or moisture, Snead said it is worth having them replaced.

"Properly installed replacement windows would be a significant upgrade in the layers of insulation," Snead said. "It's not just an energy efficiency investment, but it's also an investment in the quality and value of the home. The appearance will be better, and the maintenance will be reduced."

People can take a similar approach for maintenance on doors. Snead said temporary caulking can be applied to doors that are not used over the winter, and if it is a sliding glass door that will not be used, shrink-fit film kits are sized to fit doors as well. Weather-stripping doors, making sure the doors close tightly and using temporary door sweeps might also save on home energy costs.

Snead said if people have outlets on the inside surface of their outside walls, air gaps in the insulation around the electrical box in the wall might allow cold air in and warm air out.

"Put the back of your hand up to the electrical outlet on a windy day, and if you feel cool air coming in, it's probably worth removing the cover plate, placing a foam insulator on the underside of the plate and then screwing the plate back in place," Snead said.

### Evaluating insulation

Snead said if the home has not had updates to the insulation in more than 30 years, there is no question that the insulation of that home should be checked and updated.

"You can evaluate the depth that is there and whether or not it would be warranted to add or blow additional insulation on top of that," he said. "One of the things that may be missed in attic insulation is the sealing of gaps and holes in the attic floor, where pip-



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Kaysten Barrett started off 2013 working as he helped shovel snow on New Year's Day. So far the forecast for this year's holiday is warmer.

ing, wiring, and electrical, water and plumbing lines run. Many times this allows for air leakage."

There are two options to consider for insulating crawl spaces — insulating the perimeter wall or insulating the underside of the floor, he said. Insulating the perimeter wall to make the crawl space an insulated space is typically easier than insulating the underside of the floor, and is probably a better long-term strategy. It might keep homeowners from having to do additional insulation around pipes and ducts that convey heated air or water.

### Other tips

Snead recommends that people check with their utility provider to see if they have energy efficiency programs or equipment available to help save costs.

Using warmth from the sun by allowing it to shine through windows facing south, east or west might help with home heating, but Snead said make sure to close those blinds, shutters or drapes at night to minimize heat loss.

For more information about energy conservation in the home and beyond, log on to [www.engext.ksu.edu](http://www.engext.ksu.edu).

# Just a Pinch



Sharing Hometown Recipes, Cooking Tips and Coupons

By Janet Tharpe

## Warm the Family Up with this Mushroom Barley Soup

"This soup warms your soul!"



Searching for a great, hearty soup to warm you up on those winter nights? Susan Thomas' Mushroom Barley Soup is a favorite in her family and sure to be with yours. This is the perfect soup for a cool night. The sauteed mushrooms add an earthy richness that just can't be beat!

See step-by-step photos of Susan's recipe plus thousands more from home cooks nationwide at [www.justapinch.com/barleysoup](http://www.justapinch.com/barleysoup)

You'll also find a meal planner, coupons and chances to win! Enjoy and remember, use "just a pinch"...

- Janet

### Mushroom Barley Soup

#### What You Need

- 1 lb fresh mushrooms sliced
- 6 tbsp butter
- 1 c chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 2 cans beef broth (10 oz)
- 5 soup cans water
- 3 tbsp tomato paste or ketchup
- 3/4 tsp salt
- Fresh ground pepper to taste
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 c barley
- 1/4 c chopped parsley
- 1 1/2 c sliced celery and leaves
- 1 1/2 c sliced carrots
- 4 tbsp sherry

#### Directions

- Slice mushrooms. Set aside half of mushrooms.
- In large pot, melt 4 tbsp butter. Add one half mushrooms, onion, garlic. Saute 5 minutes.
- Stir in broth, water, tomato paste, salt, pepper, and bay leaf. Heat to boiling. Stir in barley. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 1 hour.
- Add parsley, celery and carrots, cook covered about 30 minutes longer until vegetables and barley are tender.
- In medium skillet, melt remaining 2 tbsp butter. Add remaining mushrooms. Saute 5 minutes. Add to soup along with sherry.

Submitted by: Susan Thomas, Wildwood, NJ (Pop. 5,325) [www.justapinch.com/barleysoup](http://www.justapinch.com/barleysoup)

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