

The Prepper's Countdown Checklist to New Year's Eve

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As November gives way to December and the last of the warm weather fades, it's time to make sure that all is in order in case of emergency.

We've made a list to help you get ready to settle in for the cold months to come so that you'll be ready for an emergency through the winter, and ready to start anew in the spring.

Let's see what our tasks are this month. Read them below, then print the calendar at the end of this article, and use it to complete these preparations one by one!

Dec 1 – Make Sure You'll Stay Warm

Whatever type of fuel you use, take a few minutes today to double check your fuel supply.

You may have central air, but since you're a prepper, you also know the importance of having a back-up heat source and plenty of fuel. If you use propane heaters, make sure that they're in good working order and that you have plenty of fuel.

If you heat with wood, how much you will need depends on several factors including the size of your house, where you live, how well your home is insulated and what type of wood you use. Usually, four cords will be more than enough for an average-sized (1500 sf) house in the Northern US through the winter, but in this case, it's better to have too much than too little.

Dec 2 – Check Water Supplies

Take today to check your water supplies to make sure you have enough and that it's safely stored where it won't freeze.

In the summer, you may only need to worry about a few days' worth of water but depending upon where you live, you may need to power up that supply to cover a couple of weeks. Remember that you can only go 24 hours without water and in extremes temperatures; you need more water than usual. One gallon of water per person per day is the minimum that you should stockpile.

Dec 3 – Clean Out Chicken Coop

Before everything turns into big frozen blobs, make your chickens' winter nesting place clean and warm today.

Chickens need a well-ventilated, clean environment. In the winter, chickens roost more and proper ventilation is important to keep down moisture created by condensation released by your chickens. Moisture can accumulate on combs and waddles and cause frostbite. Make sure that ventilation areas such as windows are sufficient to allow airflow but not drafts, because drafts can be deadly.

And read our articles about raising chickens, so you could [increase your egg production!](#)

Dec 4 – Winterize Your Garden for Next Year

Take today to get your garden ready to grow beautiful, nutritious food next year.

Trim dead stalks and remove weeds. Work your compost into the soil so that it has time to break down into valuable nutrients that will make your plants grow like crazy next spring.

Dec 5 – Clean Guns

Take today to clean your guns so that they're ready for the dampness of winter. This is one of our favorite topics on Survivopedia, so [CLICK HERE](#) to read our articles on gun cleaning.

This is a task that many people overlook but it's essential that your weapons are kept in good working order. That shotgun in the closet won't protect you if it's rusted or so dirty that the mechanisms don't work correctly when you fire it. Take a few minutes to break down your guns, clean them and oil them.

Dec 6 – Check/Stock Ammo

Take time today [to stock and rotate your ammo](#).

Hunting season just ended and summer target practicing is over. Take the time now before the snow seriously settles to make sure that you have plenty of ammo. If you only keep ammo in case SHTF, make sure that it's still in good shape to use. The life of your ammo is dependent upon the type so know what you have.

Dec 7 – Sharpen Knives

Take time today to sharpen your knives. Whether it's your hunting knives, or your kitchen knives, you've probably used them quite a bit over the summer and the blades are likely dull.

Go through the house today and sharpen all of your knives. If nothing else, [you'll have a good blade](#) with which to carve the Christmas ham!

Dec 8 – Check Fences

Take today to make sure your fences are secure, whether they're used for keeping animals in or intruders out.

Now that most of the greenery is gone, it's a great time to walk your fence line and clear it of any debris that may have fallen or tangled in it over the spring and summer months. Mend any spots that need it.

Dec 9 - Bring in Delicate Plants

If you have plants outside that you don't want to freeze, and that can be brought inside, do so now if you didn't do it already. Your herbs and other plants that you want to keep going through the winter won't do so well if they are outside in freezing temperatures! Frozen basil isn't nearly as good as fresh!

Dec 10 – Stock up on Board Games and Craft Items

Take today to make sure you have plenty to do when it's too cold to be outside.

Make sure that your board games have all of their pieces and that you have plenty of craft supplies. Since it's Christmas season, plan some homemade gifts that you can turn into a family event. A great prepper craft idea: paracord bracelets and pet collars.

Dec 11 – Clean Your Chimney

If [you use a fireplace or a wood burner](#) and you missed the autumn preparations, take today to clean your chimneys, or schedule a professional.

Creosote builds up in your chimney and pipes and will catch fire if you're not careful. This is something that you should take care of at least annually. It may not need cleaned that often, but you should at least have it checked.

Dec 12 – Clean Your Dryer Vent Pipe

Take today to clean the vent that runs outside from your dryer.

Lint is extremely flammable and buildup is one of the top causes of house fires. Even if it doesn't start a fire, excess lint in the pipe can become damp from condensation, then freeze, creating a cycle that causes further lint buildup that will cause your dryer to function less than efficiently.

Dec 13 – Wrap Young Trees

Take time today to protect the tender bark of young fruit trees by wrapping them.

The bark of young trees can be extremely thin and freezing temperatures can damage them. Since those apples and peaches are going to be delicious next fall, you don't want to kill the trees now!

Dec 14 – Wrap Your Pipes

If you didn't do it already, take today to wrap the pipes under your house in heat tape if they're prone to freezing. The same thing goes for any outdoor plumbing such as the pipes in your barn. Not only will this insure that you'll have running water when you need it, you'll also avoid costly repairs of burst pipes.

Read the tips that we've presented here about [water usage and storage during winter](#) for more info on the topic.

Dec 15 – Clean Your Gutters

Take today to clean the fall leaves from your gutters so that winter rains won't accumulate and freeze.

If water accumulates in your gutters and freezes, the weight can be enough to bring the gutter down. Since your gutters help protect the foundation of your house as well as the outer walls, it's important that they function properly.

Dec 16 – Seal Entrances from Drafts

Take today to make sure your windows and doors seal well.

One of [the biggest energy sucks](#) is leaky entrances. Not only do they raise your heating bill, it also makes your feet cold, which nobody wants! Weather stripping is dirt cheap and is available at superstores and hardware stores all over the place. Since it's so easy to install, you could probably do every single window and door in your house in a couple of hours if needed.

Or you could DIY your own insulating window frames following the instructions you'll find in [this Survivopedia article](#). Oh, and this will help keep heat-seeking creepy-crawlies out, too.

Dec 17 – Check Tools

Take today to check the condition of your winter hand tools.

There's nothing more irritating than having the handle of your snow shovel break while you're trying to dig out for work. It would probably be a bad thing if the head of your axe flings off while you're in mid-swing chopping wood, too. Take a few minutes to go over your tools to make sure that they're in good shape.

Dec 18 – Prepare Summer Machinery for Winter

Take the time to prepare your summer machinery such as lawn mowers, weed eaters and dirt bikes for winter. Depending on the machine, you may need to drain the fluids and perform other maintenance tasks to keep them ready to use next spring.

Dec 19 – Winterize Your Vehicles

Take today to [get your cars ready for winter](#), if you didn't do it already. And even if you did, an extra check would make no harm.

Cars and trucks require different care for winter weather. You need to make sure that you have antifreeze in your radiator and you may need to change to a different viscosity oil. You should probably also get tires with winter tread and check to make sure that your wipers and heater are in good working order. A good once-over will help you get safely back and forth when you need to.

It also won't hurt to throw a bag of sand in the trunk in case you get stuck, either.

Dec 20 – Prepare Winter Equipment

Take today to double-check all of your winter machinery and equipment.

Machinery such as snow plows, winches on trucks, four wheelers and other winter equipment need love, too. Make sure that your equipment is up to snuff by checking fluids, lines, tires, and other parts that make 'em go. Make sure you have plenty of salt for sidewalks, too.

Dec 21 – Stockpile Animal Feed

Take today to go grab some extra bags of feed for the dogs and livestock. If you've already done that, then check your stockpiles to make sure that they're stored so that they won't fall victim to dampness or vermin.

Dec 22 – Change Horse's Shoes or Have Shoes Removed

Take today to winterize [your horse's feet](#).

Winter is often a good time to let your horses go barefoot so that you'll have plenty of hoof to work with in the spring. Summer shoes can be slick and can cause ice balls to collect under the hoof. If you want to keep them ready for riding across slick terrain, consider using borium shoes that provide additional traction.

Also, if you blanket your horses, make sure that all the straps and buckles on your blankets are secure to prevent injury. If you've had horses for very long, you probably know that they're accidents waiting to happen!

Dec 23 - Check Your Food Stockpile

Take today to check expiration dates and rotate [your food stockpile](#).

You're probably getting ready to cook a big meal for the holidays so take today to go through your food stockpile. If you're using anything there for your meal, use this opportunity to use the oldest first and to check the expiration dates on all of your food items. Also, make sure that dried goods such as beans and flour are securely stored so that moisture and critters can't get to them.

Dec 24 and 25 - Open Presents and Enjoy the Day with your Loved Ones!

It's Christmas Eve, then Christmas. Take these two days to do whatever it is that you do with your family, and appreciate the peace and health of them all!

Merry Christmas!

Dec 26 – Waterproof Your Clothing

Take today to waterproof your outdoor gear. Nothing is more uncomfortable, or even as life-threatening, as wet clothing and shoes in freezing temperatures. There are many different ways that you can waterproof your clothes, but pick a way and do it now.

Here's a [good article](#) to help you with this task.

Dec 27 – Winterize Bug-Out Bags

Take today to make sure that you have winter items in [your bug-out bags](#).

Check clothing to make sure that it's the right size and weather-appropriate. You may want to put some heat packs in there and add some extra garbage bags, too. Oh, and a Sterno can or two wouldn't be a bad idea, either. In a pinch, they put off a ton of heat in comparison to none at all and will provide a heat/cooking source for several hours.

Just go through and make sure that you have what you need for a winter bug out.

Dec 28 – Replenish Medical Supplies

Take today to replenish your medical supplies and make sure that everything is still good. [Here's our list of top 10 types of meds that you need to stockpile.](#)

Now's a good time to go through your medical kit and make sure that it's well stocked and that all of your items are still good. For instance, medical tape goes bad after a few years and you should check the expiration dates on any medications that you keep in there, too. You probably also raided it a few times for summer boo-boos, so now's the time to make sure you have what you need in case SHTF and you can't get out.

Dec 29 – Change Batteries in Smoke Detector

Take today to change the batteries in your smoke detector.

Yes, I realize that some of you may have done this when the time changed like everybody says to do, but if you didn't, do it now. House fires increase exponentially in the winter. A smoke detector with dead batteries is just as bad as no smoke detector at all. As a matter of fact, it may be worse because you have a false sense of security.

Dec 30 – Rotate Battery Supplies

Take today to check your battery supply to make sure they're good and that you have enough. [Here's](#) what you need to know about choosing batteries for your supply.

Batteries last for a long time, but not forever. I always put a date on the pack when I buy a pack. Cylindrical carbon zinc batteries will stay good at room temperature (between 65-75 degrees) for 3-5 years, cylindrical alkaline batteries will stay good for 5-10 years and cylindrical lithium batteries will store for 10-15 years.

Still, I'd change out anything that's getting even close to that date. Just put them in something that you're going to use right now. Hint – remote controls and video game controls are a great way to get rid of batteries that need used!

Dec 31 – Break out the Wine for the New Year!

Take today finish the small chores around the house and contemplate all of the good stuff that has happened to you over the last year.

Don't focus on the bad stuff – that's all in the past! Go in early, and get ready to do whatever it is that makes you happy when the old year ends and the new year begins!

And here's the calendar that we've promised!

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Day	Date	What to Do	Checked!
Tuesday	Dec 1	Make Sure You'll Stay Warm	
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Saturday	Dec 5	Clean Guns	
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Monday	Dec 7	Sharpen Knives	
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Thursday	Dec 31	Break out the Wine for the New Year!	
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I hope that I've provided some useful chores to help you get ready for winter. If you can think of other little tasks that need doing before the snow sets in seriously, please add it in the comments section below.



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