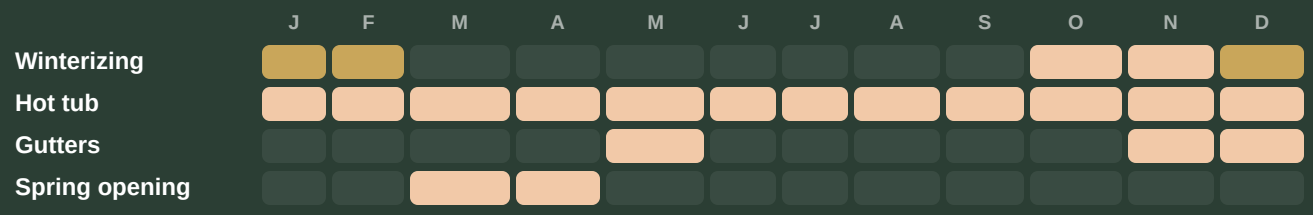
The Smokies Brief

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Seasonal checklists for Smokies cabins

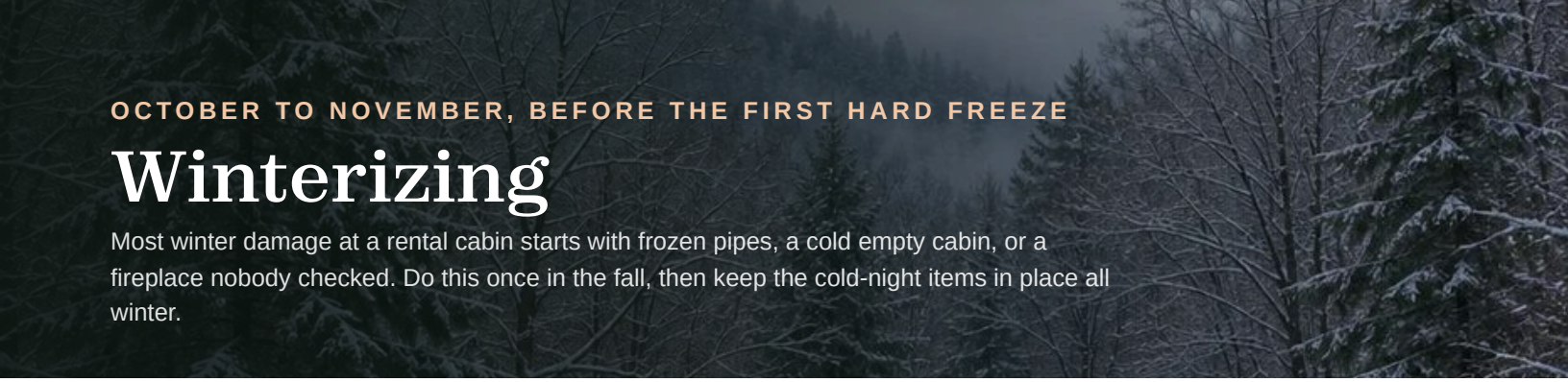
Winterizing, hot tub, gutters and spring opening, written for mountain rental cabins in Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge and Sevierville. Print a page for your cleaner or handyman and check items off as you go.

WHEN TO DO WHAT



Winterizing: do the setup in October and November (light), keep the cold-night items in place through February (gold). Hot tub: every turnover, all year.

Check off online, send a list to your cleaner, or add yearly reminders to your calendar at thesmokiesbrief.com/checklists



OCTOBER TO NOVEMBER, BEFORE THE FIRST HARD FREEZE

Winterizing

Most winter damage at a rental cabin starts with frozen pipes, a cold empty cabin, or a fireplace nobody checked. Do this once in the fall, then keep the cold-night items in place all winter.

CHECKLIST 1 OF 4

Cabin _____ Date _____ Done by _____

WATER AND PIPES

- [ ] **Disconnect, drain and store garden hoses.**[1]
  Close the inside valve to each outdoor faucet, then open the outdoor faucet so leftover water can drain.
- [ ] **Drain sprinkler and irrigation lines.**[1]
  Follow the installer's directions. Don't add antifreeze unless they tell you to.
- [ ] **Insulate exposed pipes in the crawl space, garage and along outside walls.**[1]
  These are the pipes most likely to freeze.
- [ ] **Set the empty-cabin thermostat to 55°F or higher.**[1]
  Tell your cleaners not to turn it lower between guests.
- [ ] **Label the main water shutoff and show your cleaner and handyman where it is.**
  If a pipe bursts, shutting off the water fast is what limits the damage.
- [ ] **Add a cold-night note to your house manual.**[1]
  Keep the heat steady day and night, open sink cabinets, and let a faucet on exposed pipes drip.

HEAT AND SAFETY

- [ ] **Have the chimney and wood-burning fireplace inspected.**[2]
  The national fire standard, NFPA 211, calls for an inspection at least once a year.
- [ ] **Test every smoke and carbon monoxide alarm.**[3,4]
  Replace batteries at least once a year unless the alarm has a sealed 10-year battery. Replace smoke alarms older than 10 years.
- [ ] **Leave flashlights and spare batteries where guests can find them.**[5]
  Post the Sevier County Electric outage line: 865-774-6300.
- [ ] **Consider a smart thermostat or low-temperature alarm.**
  It texts you if the cabin gets cold while it's empty.

DRIVEWAY AND GUESTS

- [ ] **Line up someone to clear snow and ice, and keep a shovel and ice melt by the door.**
  Steep cabin driveways are often the hardest part of a winter stay.
- [ ] **Send guests the winter guide before arrival.**
  It covers road closures, driving on snow, frozen pipes and outages.

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME

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_____

_____

1 American Red Cross, Preventing & Thawing Frozen Pipes: https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm/frozen-pipes.html 2 Chimney Safety Institute of America, Homeowner Resources (NFPA 211): https://www.csia.org/homeowner-resources 3 NFPA, Smoke Alarm Information: https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/home-fire-safety/smoke-alarms 4 CPSC, Change Smoke and CO Alarm Batteries: https://www.cpsc.gov/Newsroom/News-Releases/2023/Its-Time-to-Change-Smoke-and-Carbon-Monoxide-Alarm-Batteries-as-Daylight-Saving-Time-Ends 5 Sevier County Electric System, Contact: https://sces.net/contact/



EVERY TURNOVER, PLUS MONTHLY AND EVERY FEW MONTHS

Hot tub

Guests notice a cloudy or lukewarm hot tub fast, and it's also a real safety item. Give this list to whoever handles turnovers.

CHECKLIST 2 OF 4

Cabin _____ Date _____ Done by _____

EVERY TURNOVER

- [ ] **Test the water before each check-in.**[1,2]
  Free chlorine at least 3 ppm (up to 10), or bromine 4–8 ppm. Keep pH between 7.0 and 7.8.
- [ ] **Check the temperature: 104°F or lower.**[3]
  Never set it above 104°F.
- [ ] **Look at the drain covers.**[4]
  They should be in place and not cracked or missing. If one is broken, shut the tub down until it's replaced.
- [ ] **Skim the water, wipe the waterline and rinse the filter if it looks dirty.**
- [ ] **Close and lock the safety cover.**[4]
  Check that the straps and clips still latch.

MONTHLY

- [ ] **Test the GFCI that protects the hot tub.**[5]
  Press TEST and the power should cut off. Press RESET and it should come back. If it doesn't, have it replaced.
- [ ] **Deep-clean or swap the filter as your owner's manual says.**
- [ ] **Check the cover for tears, sagging or water weight.**
  A waterlogged cover won't hold heat or lock well.
- [ ] **Don't use stabilized chlorine (dichlor or trichlor) in the hot tub.**[1]
  The CDC recommends against cyanuric acid in hot tubs.

EVERY FEW MONTHS

- [ ] **Drain, clean the shell and refill.**
  Follow the schedule in your owner's manual. Heavy rental use usually means more often.
- [ ] **Have a professional check the pump, heater and drain covers.**[4]
  Make sure you know where the pump's shutoff switch is.
- [ ] **Post or refresh the hot tub rules for guests.**[3]
  No glass, kids supervised, and the 104°F limit.

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME

1 CDC, Home Pool and Hot Tub Water Treatment and Testing: https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-swimming/about/home-pool-and-hot-tub-water-treatment-and-testing.html 2 CDC, What You Can Do to Stay Healthy in Hot Tubs: https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-swimming/safety/what-you-can-do-to-stay-healthy-in-hot-tubs.html 3 CPSC, CPSC Warns of Hot Tub Temperatures: https://www.cpsc.gov/Newsroom/News-Releases/1980/CPSC-Warns-Of-Hot-Tub-Temperatures 4 CPSC, Warning for Pools, Spas, and Hot Tubs: https://www.cpsc.gov/Newsroom/News-Releases/1996/CPSC-Issues-Warning-for-Pools-Spas-and-Hot-Tubs 5 Electrical Safety Foundation International, How to Use GFCIs: https://www.esfi.org/how-to-use-gfcis



LATE FALL AFTER THE LEAVES DROP, AND AGAIN IN LATE SPRING

Gutters

Cabins under hardwoods fill gutters fast. Overflow ends up at the foundation, behind the fascia or in the crawl space.

CHECKLIST 3 OF 4

Cabin _____ Date _____ Done by _____

CLEAN

- [ ] **Clean the gutters at least twice a year.**[1,2]
  Late fall after the leaves drop and late spring after trees shed. Cabins with trees overhead may need it more often.
- [ ] **Flush each gutter with a hose and make sure every downspout runs freely.**[2]
  If water backs up, the downspout is clogged.
- [ ] **Clear them before winter so ice dams don’t form.**[3]

CHECK

- [ ] **Make sure downspouts empty at least 5 feet from the foundation.**[4]
  Water should land on ground that slopes away from the cabin. Add an extension or splash block if it doesn’t.
- [ ] **Look for sagging sections, loose hangers, leaking seams and rust.**[5]
- [ ] **Check the gutter guards too.**[5]
  They cut down on clogs but don’t stop all of them.
- [ ] **Trim branches hanging over the roof.**

SAFETY

- [ ] **Use a ladder that reaches 3 feet above the gutter, or hire it out.**[1]
  On steep mountain lots, hiring it out is often the safer call.
- [ ] **Do a quick walk-around after big storms.**

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME

1 State Farm, How to Clean Gutters and Downspouts Safely: https://www.statefarm.com/simple-insights/residence/stepbystep-guide-to-gutter-cleaning 2 HousingInfo, How to Keep Your Gutters Clean and Working Properly: https://housinginfo.org/home-maintenance-repairs/how-to-keep-your-gutters-clean-and-functioning 3 HousingInfo, Keeping Your Home’s Exterior in Good Condition: https://housinginfo.org/home-maintenance-repairs/how-to-maintain-your-homes-exterior 4 RestoreAdvisor, Gutter & Downspout Overflow (IRC R801.3): https://www.restoreadvisor.com/water-damage-restoration/gutter-overflow 5 PuroClean, 6 Steps to Clean Gutters Safely: https://www.puroclean.com/bloomington-il-puroclean-bloomington/blog/6-steps-to-clean-gutters-safely-before-winter-arrives/



MARCH TO APRIL, BEFORE SPRING BREAK AND SUMMER BOOKINGS

Spring opening

Bears wake up hungry, decks come out of a wet winter, and summer guests are close. A spring walk-through catches problems before your busy season.

CHECKLIST 4 OF 4

Cabin _____ Date _____ Done by _____

BEARS ARE BACK

- [ ] **Lock down trash before bears come out of their dens.**[1,2]
  Some bears leave their dens in March, and by the end of April most are out looking for food.
- [ ] **Check that bear-resistant cans latch, and remind guests to latch them every time.**[3]
  Gatlinburg requires animal-resistant containers in many areas, and feeding bears is illegal there.
- [ ] **Take down bird feeders and clean the grill.**[1,2]
  Bears remember easy food from last year.

OUTSIDE

- [ ] **Walk the deck and stairs.**[4]
  Probe for soft or spongy wood, check that railings don't give, and look for rusted or loose fasteners at the ledger board.
- [ ] **Re-seal the deck if the coating has worn away.**[4]
- [ ] **Do the spring gutter cleaning.**
- [ ] **Turn outdoor faucets back on and watch for leaks.**
  A pipe that froze over the winter often shows up now.
- [ ] **Look for wasp nests under eaves, decks and railings.**

INSIDE

- [ ] **Replace HVAC filters and have the air conditioning serviced before summer.**
- [ ] **Check the crawl space for standing water, pests and torn vapor barrier.**
- [ ] **Test smoke and CO alarms and every GFCI outlet.**[5,6]
  Both should be tested monthly.
- [ ] **Drain and refill the hot tub after winter, and replace a worn filter.**
- [ ] **Update your house manual with spring events and park road openings.**

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME

1 BearWise, Be BearWise at Home: Seven Tips for a BearWise Spring: https://bearwise.org/article-bank/articles-be-bearwise-at-home/ 2 BearWise, What Bears Do in April: https://bearwise.org/what-bears-do-in-april/ 3 City of Gatlinburg, Black Bear Management Program: https://www.gatlinburgtn.gov/page/black-bear-management-program 4 NADRA, Check Your Deck Consumer Checklist: https://www.nadra.org/blog/tips-for-a-beautiful-and-safe-deck 5 NFPA, Smoke Alarm Information: https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/home-fire-safety/smoke-alarms 6 Electrical Safety Foundation International, How to Use GFCIs: https://www.esfi.org/how-to-use-gfcis