

A special time of the year is upon us! No, not that season! Crow season! As you may have noticed, our area becomes very popular with crows in the fall and winter. Omnivorous creatures just as comfortable eating leftovers as they are eating grains, crows are often lured by the easy meals they find at the curb on trash day. Smarter than you might expect, crows can easily access food scraps in simple plastic trash bags. On a windy day, their scavenging can go from simple inconvenience to unsanitary and downright disgusting as household garbage is scattered up and down the streets by the elements. Who hasn't had to pick scraps of litter from their yard and wondered who could be so rude and careless? The answer could very well be crows – dark menace of the blustery autumn day!



There is a simple way to combat this common nuisance. All you need to do is purchase a durable metal or plastic trash can with a tight fitting lid, and use it. That's it! How easy is that? Make sure you have enough cans for your household's needs and be careful about putting the lid on tightly. Before you know it, the crow problem will be a thing of the past. As an added bonus, the proper use of trash cans can deter a wide range of other suburban scavengers including mice, rats, raccoons, squirrels, bears and opossums. Remember to keep the can and recycling containers in the rear yard or the garage between pickups, so one eyesore isn't replaced with another, and watch the quick difference it makes in your community.

Crows aren't the only special consideration for this time of year. Falling temperatures bring concerns which may seem simple enough, but can easily cause property damage or injury if they aren't attended to.

The first is your neighbor's pipes. Below-freezing or fluctuating temperatures can cause expanding and contracting within a home's plumbing system, which can lead to burst pipes. Know that vacant property a couple of doors down? Has it been properly winterized? Are you sure? A vacant rental or foreclosed property may not have had the water or other utilities properly shut off. Burst pipes can not only fundamentally damage a property, leading to costly repairs, but often a property remains vacant for much longer than it would have originally. Sometimes, especially in attached homes such as townhomes and condos, these burst pipes damage neighboring units as well. It is important to keep us notified of vacant structures in your neighborhood, especially if they have been neglected or unattended. If the property is unoccupied for an extended period, and isn't clearly identified as having been winterized, play it safe and send us an email at neighborhoods@gaitHERsburgmd.gov or give us a call at 301-258-6340.

Falling temperatures can lead to snow. Much to the joy of neighborhood kids and the chagrin of those of us who have to drive in it, snow can be a part of our winter in Gaithersburg. As much as we all wish snow could just be for sledding and building snowmen, there's also a bit of responsibility that comes with a snow fall. Did you know that a lot of your neighbors depend on the sidewalks which line Gaithersburg's streets? It's true! They use them for exercise, getting to school or work, or just taking the dog for a walk. They are essential for safe pedestrian travel. That's why it's important to make sure the sidewalks adjoining your property are clear of ice and snow. If they're left to sit or freeze, people can suffer a lot more than just soggy boots. School children may be forced into the roadway, and there's always the chance of sprained ankles and broken wrists when sidewalks and driveway aprons are not properly cleared.

Another consideration for a pending snowfall is where you are parking your vehicle. Our Public Works crews are out on the road during and after a snow storm making sure the roads are clear and safe. This goes a lot easier for us, and quicker for you, if the streets are free of parked cars. If you have a driveway, we urge you to use when snow is predicted. This works for your benefit as well! The car is safely away from motorists who might slide in slippery conditions, and unless the snow gets really heavy, your car is going to provide a nice big spot on your driveway you don't have to shovel. Please remember not to park on a cul-de-sac, and if a snow emergency is declared, make sure you aren't parked on a City street designated as a snow emergency route. There should be signs on your street to let you know if yours is one of these no parking zones when it snows, but if you're unsure you can always call our Public Works department at 301-258-6370.

Fall and Winter are wonderful times in the City of Gaithersburg. With the holidays fast approaching, and that special chill in the air, it's easy to get caught up in the season, and if you follow the advice above, we can all help ensure that season is bright for everyone.

Happy Holidays from Neighborhood Services

John Ketterman, Rental Housing Inspector
Steve Marquina, Code Administration Officer
Allen Meyer, Code Administration Officer
Emily Rainone, Code Administration Officer
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