

Keeping Minnesota *Ready*



HOW TO CLOSE UP YOUR HOME IN COLD WEATHER

There are several steps to take to protect your home if you have to close it up in cold weather. While homes with private wells and septic systems may require more protective action than homes with city water and sewer, there are things that all homeowners can do to protect unheated homes.

BE SURE TO ADDRESS RISKS OF LEAVING YOUR HOME UNHEATED

The most common, and extensive, damage to unheated homes is caused by frozen water pipes. There is no way to be certain pipes won't freeze, but in general, when your home is without heat for more than a day, you should:

- Turn off the water supply where it comes into the home from the street or well. The turnoff is usually in the basement or utility room. Consult your water company if you are not sure where the valve is located. Well-water pumps should be turned off.
- Open all the faucets, including shower and tub faucets, to drain all the water out of the pipes. The water will drain slowly out of the lowest-level faucets in the basement near a laundry, or into the bathtub in a house with no basement. If possible, use an air compressor or cans of compressed air to force the water out of pipes.
- Remove the hoses from your washing machine and open these faucets, too.
- Flush toilets at least twice to drain water out of them. Remove as much water as possible from the toilet bowl and the water tank.
- Pour recreational vehicle (RV) anti-freeze into all areas that have water left in them including toilet bowls, toilet water tanks, all the sink drains, floor drains, laundry-box drains, etc.
- Call a professional (your gas company) to turn off the gas valve to your hot water tank.

TURNING THE WATER BACK ON

- Go through the house and turn all faucets, showers and tubs to OFF.
- Reconnect the washing machine hoses to the correct faucets.
- Turn the water back ON to the house at the main water valve from the street or well.
- Water will immediately begin flowing to refill the toilets.

Beware: If there are damaged pipes, this is when they'll begin to leak. Listen carefully for flowing-water sounds after toilet tanks are refilled. The water-flow sounds should stop after about 60 seconds and be silent while the faucets are still turned off. If the water flow sound persists after 60 seconds, turn the main water valve back to OFF and look through your house for visual signs of water leaks and damage. If water damage has occurred, leave the main valve off and phone for professional help to locate and repair frozen water pipes.

