

We all know Idaho's weather can be unpredictable. Just wait 5 minutes and things will change. In 2017 Idaho saw record setting snowfall and subzero temperatures that wreaked havoc on many buildings. Vacant or infrequently used buildings are extra vulnerable.



What's the Risk?

You can avoid frozen pipes and water damage by taking simple steps to winterize properly, especially vacant, or infrequently used buildings.

Start at the exterior of the building and do the following:



- **Shut off the water at the street**- most water meters are close to the sidewalk or street, make sure your utility department shuts off the water at the meter.
- **Open your lowest faucets on your property** -This is most likely an outside spigot or in a basement. Remove any hoses, drain these faucets first, and keep them open until you have drained the rest of the building's system. After everything is drained, give the exterior spigots an extra layer of protection with insulation or a bib cover.
- **Give some attention to water heaters** – Turn off the gas or electrical service to the water heaters. After turning off the water heater, drain it completely according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Drain the water system** – drain all toilets, toilet tanks, and other pipes, making sure there is as little water in the system as possible. Open the spigots for showers and sinks, starting at the uppermost level and systematically working your way downwards to the lowest level of the building (those low-level faucets you opened earlier). This will help the draining process.
- **Don't forget the laundry, garage, basement** – bathrooms and kitchens will be the primary target areas but be sure you attend to all rooms with running water. Also drain any exterior water lines, like sprinkler systems. It might even be good to blow out the lines with compressed air after the lines have been emptied.

- **Pour environmentally safe, biodegradable antifreeze into drains** – it is recommended to use the type of antifreeze used in boats or RVs. It will help any remaining water in P traps to resist freezing. Treat toilet bowls, tanks, and sinks or any other drains in the facility.
- **Tape the toilets shut and post “do not use” signs** – So people won’t inadvertently use them, tape the toilet lids shut and post signs “Caution: Winterized- do not use.”
- **If you leave the heat on...** - be sure the temperature is set to at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Even if you leave the heat on, you should still turn off the water and drain the system. Winter storms frequently knock out power for days and could cause pipes to freeze.



- **What to do if you leave the water on** – insulate pipes on exterior walls, crawl spaces, and attics. Open cabinet doors to allow heat to circulate around un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances. Let warm water drip or gently stream (depends on how cold and how long the freeze is) overnight to keep pipes from freezing.
- **During extreme cold spells inspect the property daily** – walk through the property looking for damage or potential problems that could lead to pipes freezing and water damage.

Act Fast When an Incident Occurs

Have an action plan in place when you discover frozen or leaking pipes.

- Have an emergency contact that can be reached 24/7
- Have a response plan
- Be prepared!

