



# CATHOLIC MUTUAL GROUP

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**Date:** January 9, 2025  
**To:** Parish and school facility managers  
**From:** Jordan Harper, Catholic Mutual Group  
**Re:** Preventing frozen pipes and winterizing your building

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Winter is here! We will experience freezing temperatures this week. Below are some tips to avoid frozen pipes and winterize your buildings.

**Here are some tips on how to avoid the inconvenience that a frozen pipe causes:**

- SPRINKLER PIPES IN ATTIC, CRAWL SPACES - Insulate all water pipes and sprinkler pipes in attic and crawl space areas.
- INSULATE EXTERIOR FAUCETS, PIPES – to keep them from freezing.
- FAUCET DRIP - Run a steady stream of water (low pressure) especially on faucets that are located on outside walls.
- THERMOSTAT - It is important to maintain adequate building temperature during extreme cold, especially for vacant buildings or buildings with minimal staff. **The recommended heat should be set to 60 degrees during these unusually cold periods.**
- FREEZE ALARMS- Consider installing freeze alarms to thermostats in your vacant and seldom used buildings with water. These alarms are inexpensive and provide added protection in the event your heat fails.
- CABINET DOORS - Open cabinet doors and closets on outside walls to increase heat transfer to those areas and allow heat to pipes under sinks.
- SPACE HEATERS - If you choose to utilize space heaters, they should be continuously monitored to avoid fires. Be sure to remove all combustibles and storage from within 3 feet of the space heater.
- WATER LINES IN CEILING - If you have water pipes in ceilings, remember to open some ceiling tiles for the coldest nights to help ensure that some warm air circulates in the ceiling to help prevent the pipes from freezing.

- BOILER/FURNACE - Have a plan in place in the event the boiler or furnace malfunctions. Call a technician immediately. Water may need to be turned off to prevent rupture.
- SPRINKLER SYSTEMS –
  - Conduct regular inspection, testing and maintenance of the system is performed by a qualified National Fire Sprinkler Association contractor in accordance with National Fire Protection Association guidelines.
  - Install and test the system’s water flow alarms to alert users water might be flowing in the system.
  - Drain all water and condensation from drains and low points as often as necessary.
  - Check pressures daily during cold weather, especially at night when temperatures are lowest.
- FROZEN PIPES – KNOW THE SIGNS
  - Frost on the surface
  - Unusual odors coming from a drain.
  - No water

Should you determine that you have frozen pipes, it is very important to properly thaw them as incorrect methods could result in the pipe bursting and flooding the space. **Do not attempt to thaw pipes with blow torches or other flame generating devices as many fires have occurred due to improper use.**

- First and foremost, the water supply should be shut off.
- Immediately contact your plumber or mechanical contractor as it may be necessary for a qualified technician to properly thaw frozen water pipes.

**Here are some tips on winterizing your buildings:**

- Replace furnace filters. This should also be done at least every two months throughout the winter for maximum efficiency. The furnace should be serviced by a professional every year. Check the thermostat to ensure it is working properly.
- Examine the water heater for leaks and make repairs as needed.
- Clean and vacuum vents, ducts and baseboard heaters.
- Clean and inspect your chimney for blockages. Check flashing around the chimney or where the roof meets the walls; caulk and seal any open joints. Also, ensure that the flue is open and fireplace doors seal tightly.
- Check your roof for leaks or damaged, loose or missing roof shingles. Ensure necessary repairs are made to reduce the chance of water damage.
- Check and repair exterior walls that have peeling paint or missing or loose siding.
- Drain water from the sprinkler system. Drain and remove garden hoses. Insulate exterior faucets by wrapping them with a blanket, bubble wrap or insulation tape.
- Ensure all outdoor lights, switches, timers and bulbs are working properly. Ensure the timers are reset to compensate for earlier nightfall.

- Clean gutters and storm drains. Ensure that downspouts carry water at least 6' away from the building.
- Check for low spots around the exterior of the building where drainage might be a problem. Fill trouble areas so the ground slopes away from the building.
- Clean and oil all sliding windows. Any leaks or cracks around windows and doors should be caulked or sealed with weather-stripping.
- Fill cracks in driveway and sidewalks with silicone caulk or another suitable material. These cracks will only get worse if water gets into them and freezes.
- Drain gasoline from the lawnmower into a proper gasoline container and store in a safe location.
- Give your deck an additional coat of sealer.
- Ensure adequate snow removal supplies are on hand such as gasoline for the snow blower, shovels, sand, and salt.
- Stock the emergency supply kit in case a power outage should occur. (i.e., flashlight, radio, batteries, candles, matches, bottled water, non-perishable food)

In the event of a loss, please contact both of the following:

- Catholic Mutual (Jordan Harper) at (404)920-7377 office or cell (504) 491-3126, [jharper@catholicmutual.org](mailto:jharper@catholicmutual.org)
- BELFOR Property Restoration (Sherrie Boylan) at (678) 378-7661.