



Winter Break Tips for House

A. Prevent Pipe Freezing

When water freezes it expands. If water in pipes is allowed to freeze, the pipes will burst. When the water in the pipes thaws, the result is massive leakage and severe damage to the house. Property loss from frozen water pipes is common. However, it can be avoided if the following steps are taken:

1. Disconnect all hoses from exterior water spigots.
2. Do not turn off the heat in the chapter house. Maintain the heat in the building at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit.
3. Leave doors open in rooms that contain plumbing appliances so that warm air can circulate.
4. If piping is run through enclosed cabinets, such as lavatories in bathrooms or enclosed kitchen sink cabinets, leave the cabinet doors open to allow warm air to circulate.
5. If your heating system does not require water, you could turn the water supply to the building off at the main valve. However, make sure that the fire sprinkler system water supply is not affected.
6. Upon turning off the water supply, drain the pipes by opening a faucet at the lowest end of the system (i.e., basement) and a faucet at the upper end of the system.
7. If you have to, or elect to leave the water on, susceptible faucets and pipes located inside an exterior wall should be left on to a slow drip.

B. Fire Extinguishers and Safety Systems

The fire extinguishers and other smoke and fire safety systems should be checked and serviced routinely. It is a good time to test all the safety systems when the house is empty.

C. Secure Doors and Windows

All doors and windows should be locked. A security bar could be placed in the runner of each ground floor window. For theft prevention and energy conservation, the drapes and blinds should be closed.

D. Timers on Lights

Exterior lights help deter trespassers. Motion-sensor lights and automatic timers are convenient and will ensure that the lights are turned on and off when desired.

E. Unplug All Appliances

Make sure all appliances in the common areas and individual rooms are unplugged to avoid unnecessary fire risks.

F. Secure Expensive Items

If a specific storage closet is unavailable, one room should be designated for locking up all target items including stereos, TVs, VCRs, and speakers.

G. Protection against Vandalism

Sometimes people break into a building simply for the sake of destruction. Composites, trophies, and chapter knick-knacks are often the target of such vandalism, and some of these items are irreplaceable. Make sure these types of memorabilia are safely locked up and out of sight.

H. Secure Outdoor Valuables

Lock up those items that could be easily stolen, such as yard tools, patio furniture, etc.

I. Fireplace Maintenance

For houses that have a fireplace, make sure that chimneys are cleaned annually. Once again, one of the best times to get this taken care of is when the house is empty. When using wood burning fireplaces, keep it enclosed and keep combustibles away from the hearth

J. Snow Maintenance

Whether you hire someone local or appoint a chapter member who lives near by, someone should be in charge of keeping the sidewalks clear of snow and ice. City ordinances usually require walks to be cleared immediately following a snowfall. Shoveled walkways give the impression that the building is occupied. Extremely heavy snows may require certain types of roofs to be shoveled and tree limbs brushed off to prevent damage.

With proper preparation, you can enjoy your holidays with peace of mind knowing that the chapter house and member's personal belongings will be safe and secure during your winter break.