

Winter Freeze Prevention

Loss Control, Water Damage Prevention, 4

If your house of worship does not adequately prepare for winter, freeze-ups can wreak havoc on your church property. Wind, hail, ice, snow, and frozen pipes can cause extensive damage to church property and significantly disrupt your ministry. Severe winter weather threatens churches in most of the country at some point. Learn how an effective freeze prevention program can protect your ministry and house of worship.

Inspections

- If you do not already have one, form a relationship with a local professional plumber. You can inspect some areas easily, but a plumber should inspect the system as well (especially if you are experiencing any issues). A thorough inspection will include all pipes, valves, water heaters, and drains. Components are assessed for leaks, corrosion, clogs, and drainage problems.
- Keep a record of plumbing fixtures prone to frequent failures (galvanized or steel pipes and connectors).
- Check water distribution systems, including bathroom fixtures, kitchen plumbing and drinking fountains, especially ones that are old and degraded.
- Survey buildings and equipment to find insulation and heat deficiencies. Check for unwanted outside air; look for vents and openings in windows, walls, roofs, or floors. Repair any broken windows and doors.
- Drain low point drains (drum drips) on dry-pipe sprinkler systems to remove water that may be present from condensation or accidental trips.
- Provide adequate heat (50° F) for dry-pipe valve rooms, pump rooms, and water tanks.
- Place non-freeze fire extinguishers (dry chemical, carbon dioxide) in areas subject to freezing.
- Regularly look for signs of moisture from leaking pipes and fixtures and freeze hazards. Check underneath sinks for water stains/drips when the water is running.
- Immediately unclog slow drains but avoid using chemical products that can cause corrosion on pipes.
- Check toilets for loose fittings including flapper (the plug that falls against the drain hole in the bottom of the tank).
- Replace hoses if there are visible signs of cracks, brittleness, or leaking.

Temperature Monitoring

- Appoint individuals to monitor weather reports.
- Establish guidelines to alert management and maintenance personnel.
- Maintain indoor temperatures of 50°F (or higher) and assign someone to monitor.
- Provide adequate heating throughout areas susceptible to freezing, such as in stairwells, above dropped ceilings, and attic spaces.
- Put thermometers in key areas throughout your church.
- Monitor boilers and other heat supply sources, using personnel and/or supervisory devices.

Snow and Ice Removal

- Remove snow from roofs, hydrants, sprinkler control valves, and roadways.
- Snow can weigh quite a bit and put unusual pressure on a roof. Each roof has an acceptable [“snow load.”](#) To avoid a roof collapse from dense or prolonged snow exposure, hire a professional roofer to remove the snow.
- Maintain drains clear of snow and ice. Maintain clear paths to the drains.
- Monitor snow piles and have a removal plan should it pose hazardous obstacles.
- De-ice sidewalks and walkways to avoid slips and falls.
- Clean and replace wet floor mats in entryways and indoor walkways to reduce slick floors.