With southern states experiencing winter conditions like never before, churches may find themselves in unfamiliar situations. There are steps you can take today that can protect your church now and in the future.

- As safely as you can, keep your building and equipment warm. Heating systems are a lifeline during cold conditions; if they fail, major damage and property losses could occur.
- Unplug or disconnect all electronic equipment. Anticipate that voltage surges will occur. The best protection is equipment isolation. If critical equipment must remain energized, make sure it is protected by surge protection devices.
- Voltage surge protection is necessary at all times - especially during cold, freezing conditions. Severe weather can cause power loss. When electricity is restored, the sudden surge of power can damage critical electronic equipment.
- Insulate pipes where needed for freeze protection. You can do this even now during the cold weather because it is done from the inside.
- Open cabinet doors to help warm air reach pipes under sinks to keep them warm.
- Use towels/rags/blankets to warm the pipes. Do not attempt to thaw a frozen pipe with a torch.
- If a pipe freezes, open the faucets to relieve pressure. Doing so will reduce the chance of a pipe bursting. Increase the temperature in the room.
- If a pipe bursts, immediately turn off the water at the main shut-off valve and contact a licensed plumber.
- If you have turned off water to the building, sprinkler systems will not function in the event of a fire. Purchase fire extinguishers and monitor the building regularly until pipes are repaired (if needed) and water is restored.
- Once the temperature starts to rise, pipes that are currently frozen will begin to leak as the water within changes from a solid to a liquid again. Make sure pipes are checked often and shut off the main water valve if necessary.
- Perform a visual inspection of the buildings. Verify that all windows, doors, and dampers are closed.
- Collect and distribute a list of emergency phone numbers and contacts for snow removal, heating system repair companies, utility issues, and the weather updates.
- Anticipate the potential for flooding. Severe cold weather can cause flooding. Move vulnerable equipment or stock away from areas prone to water damage.
- If your church has heat and chooses to act as a warming shelter for those impacted by power outages or for those who do not utilize homeless shelters, consider the following:
  - Follow CDC interim guidance for disaster shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic, which recommends against large congregate shelters. Due to the pandemic, large congregate shelters should only be used as a last resort.
  - During disasters, resource availability may limit the ability to apply CDC and local guidance. Best efforts should be made to implement guidelines to the extent possible.
  - For a full list of resources and materials regarding COVID-19 considerations, visit InsuranceBoard.org.