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## **Preparing Vacant and Seasonal Properties for Winter**

Winter is once again upon us, bringing the sub-zero temperatures many dread. It is also the time when organizations with vacant or seasonal properties need to look at taking the right steps to protect their buildings from weather-related issues.

Water damage is one of the most common problems in buildings that do not see regular occupancy. Water can do a huge amount of damage to a building in a short period of time. It can severely damage floors, drywall, and electrical wiring. Water has a way of getting into every nook and cranny a building has.

The first step in preparing a vacant or seasonal building for winter is to turn off its main water supply and drain all the lines completely. These steps help prevent lines from freezing and bursting, plus prevent a large discharge of water should the plumbing fail in the cold. Once the main water supply is turned off, very little water can escape, limiting or outright preventing any damage.

Once the water is off, it is safe to reduce or turn off the heat in the building.

The next step is to unplug all appliances. This protects appliances in the event of power surges or lighting strikes, which, though rare, can cause costly damage. Depending on the building's location and the availability of the shut off, it may also be worth turning off the power. This could be as simple as turning off all the electrical breakers.

The third step is to go through the building and ensure that all windows and outside doors are locked. This will deter trespassing while the building is unoccupied and deter animals who may see it as an attractive place to spend the winter months.

Finally, we recommend removal of all garbage in and around the building. This limits the chance of a fire in the event the trash contains combustibles.

We always suggest using checklists to make sure winter preparations for the building are complete and everything is done properly.

No one wants to come back in the spring to discover a building needs major repairs. Following the above steps will greatly reduce the risk of an incident during the cold winter months.

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