

SECURING THE CHAPTER HOUSE FOR WINTER BREAK

Attention to details will prevent damage, theft, and vandalism from spoiling your chapter's winter holidays.

December is a month filled with an assortment of activities. Many of the month's hours are devoted to studying for exams and making travel plans for holiday festivities. In this hectic atmosphere it is essential that chapters prepare to secure the chapter house as members vacate the house for the holidays.

To prepare for winter break, when few or no people will be in the chapter house, there are several things that need to be done to ensure the protection of the structure. Consider the following checklist as it applies to your situation.

Prevent Pipe Freezing

When water freezes it expands. Therefore, 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:

- Disconnect all hoses from exterior water spigots.
- **DO NOT TURN OFF THE HEAT.** Maintain the heat in the building at no less than 60 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Leave doors open in rooms that contain plumbing appliances so that warm air can circulate through these rooms.
- 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 in these spaces.
- 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's water supply is not affected.
- Upon turning off the water supply as described above, 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 (uppermost floor).
- If you must, or elect to leave the water on, susceptible faucets and piped located inside an exterior wall could be left on to a slow drip.

Fire Department, Police and Alarm Company Notification

Be sure to notify the fire department, police department and your alarm company whether the chapter house will be open or closed, and make sure they know the individual to contact in the event of an emergency. If the police and alarm company know your property will be closed, they will watch the premises more closely.

Additional Information

Fire Extinguishers and Safety Systems

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

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.

Timers On Lights

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

Unplug All Appliances

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

Secure Expensive Items

If a specific storage closet is unavailable, one room should be designated for locking up all target items for burglars, such as stereos, TVs, VCRs, speakers, paintings, etc.

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.

Secure Outdoor Valuables

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

Snow Maintenance

Whether you hire a local person or appoint a chapter member who lives nearby, 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 walks also 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 the chapter house and members' personal belongings will be safe and secure during your school's winter break.