

Get your Property Ready for Winter

GET YOUR STRATA OR CONDO CORPORATION READY FOR WINTER

As the winter and holiday season approaches, it's important that strata and condominium corporations ensure their buildings and properties are ready for the freezing wintry conditions that will sweep across most of the country or the wet deluges that hit Canada's more temperate west coast.

Here are our top 5 risk prevention tips to help with winterization:



1. Inspect and Maintain Heating Systems

One of the primary concerns during winter is maintaining a safe and comfortable internal temperature inside buildings. It is essential to conduct routine inspections of heating systems to ensure they are operating safely and efficiently.

That includes arranging for professional technicians to check and maintain boilers, furnaces, and other heating devices. Be sure to promptly repair any issues detected and replace parts as necessary.



2. Secure Plumbing and Pipes

Frozen pipes can cause significant damage to strata and condo buildings, leading to expensive repairs and potential disruption for residents. Inspect all plumbing lines and pipes, paying special attention to those located in exterior walls, attics, or unheated areas.

Properly insulate pipes with foam insulation or heat tape to prevent freezing and the possibility of bursting. It is recommended that the property be kept at a minimum temperature of 16°C/55°F even if it's vacant for extended periods of time.

It's also wise to turn off exterior faucets and remove outside hoses and sprinklers. Water can build up in these unprotected and un-insulated lines, freeze and then burst pipes if temperatures drop well below zero.



3. Maintain Exterior Maintenance

Winter weather can be harsh, causing damage to exterior surfaces such as roofs, walls, and windows. Conduct a thorough assessment of these areas to identify any potential issues that may become problematic during winter. This includes repairing any cracks, gaps, or loose shingles to prevent water infiltration and minimize the risk of leaks.

Good preventative maintenance also requires ensuring adequate caulking around windows and weatherstripping around doors to prevent drafts and cold air seepage. Regularly clean gutters by removing the last leaves and twigs from fall and downspouts to avoid ice dams and water accumulation, which may lead to back-ups and damage the building's foundation.



4. Clear Snow and Ice

Strata and condo corporations must prioritize snow and ice removal to ensure the safety of residents and minimize any potential liability from unwanted falls. Develop a plan for clearing sidewalks, parking lots, driveways, and common areas promptly after snowfall. Arrange for professional snow removal services and ensure to spread salt or sand to provide traction on slippery surfaces and prevent accidents.

The choice of melting agent is important too as there are environmental implications associated with salt, the most common de-icing agent. Some municipalities are experimenting with different types of brine using beet juice, which lowers the freezing point of ice on roads.

It's also important to keep underground parking garages cleaned and drained. In areas subject to snow and ice build-up, salt and chemicals that accumulate on vehicles and then melts in parking spaces can damage and corrode the concrete surface. And be sure to ensure that drains are kept clear at all times.



5. Communicate and Educate Residents

Effective communication and education are crucial for a successful winterization initiative. Inform residents about winterization plans, including the schedule for heating system maintenance and snow removal services during the winter months. Share educational materials on winter safety tips, such as keeping pathways clear, and reporting any maintenance issues promptly.

As many residents are away on vacation in the winter months, it's important that they take preventative steps inside their homes. This means leaving their suite at a suitable temperature, ensuring that windows are closed and that appliances are unplugged and any leaks fixed. Small problems left unattended can soon become big problems..

Also, two-way communication is vital so be sure to remind residents to "say something if they see something" that could cause damage to property. An attentive resident can often be the eyes and ears for condo managers and pre-empt problems before they become serious.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Winterization is a vital responsibility for strata and condo corporations to ensure the well-being and comfort of residents, as well as to protect the property from potential damage. For more loss control information, don't forget to connect with your BFL CANADA representative.

OUR DEDICATED TEAM

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Our team of over 180+ real estate specialists works collaboratively with you to develop a cohesive, sustainable, long term risk management plan. We are here to guide your annual insurance and risk management solutions to provide you with complete peace of mind.

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