

Closing Up the Cottage for the Winter

Now that the lazy days of summer are over, Canadians are getting ready to close up the cottage for the winter.

Although every cottage is different and every cottage owner's closing checklist is different, here are some basics to keep in mind.

Water Supply

If your cottage is not winterized, you can take steps to prevent your water supply line from freezing during the winter.

You don't want to arrive there next spring to discover the consequences of not having drained the pipes before you close up this fall.

Frozen pipes can burst, causing damage and meaning you'll have no running water.

Pipes can be fully drained when you're closing up the cottage.

The water supply line can be filled with non-toxic anti-freeze made especially for

supply pipes.

And pipes that are carefully wrapped at key junction points are better protected against the cold.

As part of your maintenance routine you should also check the inside of your hot water holding tank for residue that can affect water quality and get caught in the faucet screen.

Also, you should have your water analyzed regularly by a lab to ensure its quality, especially if the water suddenly shows a yellow or brown tinge.

A filtration system can significantly increase the purity level and lessen the wear-and-tear on your cottage water system.

This is also the ideal time to thoroughly check your plumbing and faucets after a summer's wear-and-tear.

Wildlife

Damages from small animals such as mice and squirrels are a concern to cottage owners.

Avoid using poisons to keep out these critters that love to move in when you move out.

You should remove all food from cottage before you close it.

Bats, mice and squirrels can wiggle in through the smallest of holes.

Inspect the building inside and out to make sure there are no small openings for them to enter.

Place a wooden cover on the chimney to discourage birds and small animals from entering, and to stop any rain or snow.

Tightly close your fireplace damper to prevent animals from getting in.

Electrical system

Some people choose to shut off electricity to their home in the off-season by throwing the main switch at the fuse box.

If you do this, be sure to turn off all major appliances, your water heater, and electrical room heaters before

you turn off the main switch.

This will ensure a smoother and safer start-up when you re-open your home.

If you leave your electricity on to operate security systems or lighting, you should turn off the power supply to your major appliances at your main panel.

Turn off the power supply to any space heaters.

Otherwise they may turn on during cold weather.

To ensure the stove, fridge and other electrical equipment are not used in your absence, remove fuses and hide them in a safe place.

Visually inspect your hydro meter and power lines for damage.

If a power line is down or damaged, stay clear and call your Hydro Company.

Inspect visible wiring to outdoor lighting fixtures, water pumps and other equipment.

If wires are damaged, remove the fuse to

that circuit or turn off the circuit breaker, and call a qualified electrician.

Check all household appliance cords.

If damaged, unplug the appliance and do not use it until the cord is replaced.

If your electrical panel uses fuses, make sure they are screwed in tightly and that you have spares.

Don't use fuses higher than 15 amps in normal receptacles and lighting circuits.

Boat Motors and other power equipment

When storing power boating motors and other power equipment do not drain gasoline from fuel tanks, instead use a fuel stabilizer (available from your dealer or auto parts store).

Winterize your engine(s) away from the water. Store boat motors, lawnmowers and other items with engines in a dry, weatherproof place.

Cover anything that may rust over the winter with a coat of oil.

If your cottage is in a heavy snow area, consider installing temporary

supports to protect the roof from caving in.

Another option is to hire a reliable local person to shovel the snow off the roof when necessary.

And remember that time spent in preventative measures now will pay significant dividends next spring when you open the cottage for next year's season.