

# How to close your cottage for the winter



For many people, a cottage is the idyllic retreat into the great outdoors; a place where weekends can be spent hanging out by the lakeside or gathering around the outdoor firepit. Unfortunately, cottage life isn't always a year-round affair, and many unwinterized recreational properties need to be temporarily closed before the snow hits.

Before freezing temperatures arrive, consider taking the following steps to properly prepare your cottage for the winter season:

Clean out your eavestroughs and check the roof. Eavestroughs packed with leaves and pine needles can force water to back up onto your roof shingles, a common source for unwelcome leaks. Before you pack up for the season, unclog your eavestroughs to prevent potential water damage and allow excess water to flow freely. While you're up there, be sure to inspect the roof for any loose shingles and chimney damage, and trim back any tree branches that could be a hazard.



Store furniture and tools. Protect your belongings from theft and weather damage by stowing them away in a dry place, such as a shed or inside the cottage itself. For larger items, such as boats, kayaks and canoes, safely store them covered, secured and away from public view. Outdoor furniture can make for convenient nesting material for animals, so be sure to cover cushions and seating with plastic sheets to avoid destruction. Protect your indoor furniture too by wrapping mattresses, couches and chairs, and placing fabric softener sheets in your drawers to discourage pests.



Drain your pipes and shut off the water. Frozen water lines in non-winterized cottages can quickly lead to burst pipes. Prevent major damage by shutting off your water supply and draining the lines in your home. Pour non-toxic antifreeze down drains and toilets to prevent freezing. Wrapping exposed pipes with foam insulation can also help to prevent bursts, condensation and leaks during the wintertime.

Check your sump pump and septic tank. Many recreational properties use a septic system. When the snow thaws, your home will experience elevated water levels, kicking your sump pump into high gear. Make sure it is in good working condition and will stay on in the event of a power failure, either with a backup battery or a generator. If your septic tank is due for a service before you close the cottage for the year, be sure to add this task to your to-do list. At the very least, add a good bacteria into the system to help break down waste.

