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# ABOUT YOUR HOUSE

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## WHEN YOU MUST LEAVE YOUR HOUSE BECAUSE OF A LONG WINTER POWER OUTAGE

If you must leave your home for more than 24 hours because of a power failure, here are some simple ways to prevent damage to your house.

### Water

- Turn off water supply at water service entrance (the valve is usually at the front of the house, near the basement floor).
- Open all taps and let them drain. Flush the toilet to drain the tank. If you get your water from a well, drain pumps and expansion tanks. If you have to leave for a long time and freezing is certain, pour non-toxic antifreeze (cottage or recreational vehicle antifreeze, or windshield washer) in all traps (toilets, sinks, washing machines, showers). Unhook washing machine hoses and drain. Leave all taps open.
- If the temperature inside your house will stay below freezing for a long time, drain hot water tank and turn off the power. For electric hot water tanks, turn off

the power at the breaker. For gas hot water tanks, turn the gas valve to OFF.

- If the weather is not too cold, or if you are checking the house regularly, the hot water tank may survive without draining. In this case, turn off the power to the hot water tank at the breaker or fuse box, or turn the gas valve to PILOT.
- If your house has a sump pump, it will not work without electricity. Move valuables off the basement floor in case there is flooding. CMHC's booklet *Cleaning Up Your House After A Flood* contains a useful information. You can obtain it from your local CMHC office or by calling 1 800 668-2642.

### Electricity and power

- Shut off power to house at breaker box.
- Shut power off at the breaker to the water heater, furnace, water pump (if you have one)

and sump pump.

- Make sure that the stove, oven, washing machine and portable space heaters are turned off at the switch.
- Close gas valves if you have natural gas or propane.
- Unplug major appliances so that they do not start up cold when power is restored.

### More Tips

- If you expect to be out of your house for a long time, pile snow, straw, or other insulating material around the basement walls to prevent soil freezing next to the foundation. Close the door to the basement to keep heat in.



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- Empty refrigerators and freezers. If possible, do not keep surplus food. Wedge freezer and refrigerator doors open to prevent mold growth. Ensure that the devices used to hold the doors open cannot trap a child inside.
- Notify municipal authorities—police, fire, electric and gas utilities—that you are leaving the house.
- Check sump and sump pipes for freezing before starting the sump pump.
- Turn on power to the house at the breaker box.
- Turn power on to individual appliances (including refrigerators and freezers) when they are warmed up.

### **Electricity and Power**

- Do not start major appliances until the house has returned to near normal temperature.
- Ensure that stoves, ovens, washing machines, and portable space heaters are turned off at the switch.

## **When you return to your house**

### **Water**

- Do not turn on the house water until indoor air returns to near normal temperature—in the 20°C range.
- Close all open taps, close hot water tank drain, reconnect washing machine hoses and drain.
- Turn on water at water service entrance.
- Ensure that hot water taps are running and that the hot water tank is full before turning it on. Electric hot water tanks can be turned on at the breaker. If you are unfamiliar with the operation of your gas hot water tank, call a service person to restore gas to the tank.
- Turn on the tap which is on the highest level in the house until water is flowing, to bleed air out of the system. Ensure that drains are not clogged with ice or cracked by freezing. Run other taps until water is flowing. Check for leaks from pipes where possible. If you find leaks, turn off the water supply to the leaky pipe or turn off water at the service entrance until leaks are repaired.

### **To find out about other CMHC publications, contact:**

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