

## Ice Storms and Winter Weather

- **Preparation:**
  - Monitor the national weather service during winter months in your area. [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)
  - When subfreezing temperatures are predicted, check all heating systems for proper operation and service as needed.
  - If an ice storm is predicted, anticipate a power failure.
  - Develop your plan ahead of time on how you will respond to a power failure and potential loss of heat.
- **Power Failures:**
  - If a power failure lasts more than 4 or 5 hours, the building may no longer be heated above freezing.
  - Power failures can last several days.
  - Water piping (toilets, faucets, sprinkler systems) are subject to freezing and cracking.
  - The result will be water damage to the building once the temperatures rise and the pipes thaw.
  - The damage from water can be extensive.
- **Roofs:**
  - Every year there are numerous reports of roof collapses from excessive ice and snow accumulation.
  - Snowdrifts on roofs can cause a collapse during and after large snowstorms.
  - Proper roof design should include adequate drainage.
  - Drainage should be inspected to insure clearance and effectiveness.
  - Gutter downspouts should direct drainage away from the building.
  - It is important to inspect a roof after a storm to check for any signs of collapse. Most collapses occur in sections and happen gradually.

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- **Water Pipes:**

- In severe winter weather, pipes have the potential to freeze.
- If pipes are located in exterior walls, they can be insulated to help minimize the chance of freezing and bursting.
- During long freezes, faucets can be left dripping to help minimize the chance of freezing.
- If pipes run under cabinets, the doors can be left open so that room heat can circulate around the pipes.
- Drain any pipes not needed in winter.
- If pipes do freeze, experts recommend applying heat using a hand-held hair dryer or heating coil.
- NEVER thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch!
- If pipes burst, turn off the water and call a plumber immediately.

- **Winter Storm Recovery:**

- Inspect all fire, water and heating system piping before restoring them to service.
- Where water has frozen in pipes, it is often many hours or even days after power, heat and water have been restored before pipe breakage and water damage becomes evident.
- Maintain the weather watch. Be especially cautious of rainstorms after snow as roof pooling can occur resulting in roof damage and collapse.
- Clear fire lanes, hydrants, valves, gas shutoffs, etc. of snow accumulations as soon as safely possible.