



## A Property Management Company's Guide to Cold Weather Preparation



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**Proactively getting your properties ready for winter can ease your burden and minimize cold-weather risks**

### **Key takeaways:**

- Snow and freezing temperatures can cause issues for HOAs
- Developing a plan early makes your life easier
- Hiring contractors to handle jobs is recommended



- VendorSmart can put you in touch with vetted service providers

Depending on where you live, gearing up for winter can be a lot of work.

After all, cold weather can do significant damage to homes and buildings if they're not protected. Property managers should start preparing before the snow begins to fall to limit wintertime damage.

A significant issue for property managers in charge of HOAs is that they're dealing with multiple residences, and ensuring everyone is on the same page can be challenging. In some cases, all you can do is provide [recommendations for homeowners](#). From there, they will be accountable for winterizing their properties.

Common areas are a different story, though, as property management firms likely have the responsibility of preparing these locations for winter. They will want to take the necessary steps to protect shared amenities from the damage that comes from extreme weather. Here's a look at some cold weather preparation steps you can take to ensure you get through this winter without any issues.

### **Develop a snow removal plan**

If you live in an area that experiences snowfall, you'll need a snow removal plan in place. Your property management company may be in charge of clearing the streets, sidewalks, and parking spaces whenever snow is present. You might be dealing with ice, too.

Removing snow quickly and efficiently is essential because there could be [legal issues](#) for the HOA if a resident or visitor experiences an injury after slipping. The HOA could also be liable for car accidents that occur because of snow accumulation.

There are likely local laws in place defining how long you have to remove snow and other debris after a significant downfall. Make sure you're up to date on these regulations and have a snow removal contractor that can meet your demands. Depending on the size of the common areas you're responsible for clearing, you'll want to speak with local companies that provide shoveling or plowing services. It all comes down to the size of the job.

### **Service the HVACs**

You probably won't be responsible for servicing every HVAC system within an HOA because homeowners usually have that duty. However, servicing the furnace in the clubhouse, business center, lounge, and other indoor common areas might fall under your jurisdiction and is an essential part of cold weather preparation.

Regularly servicing the HVAC systems in these areas ensures they're ready to go for winter and will prevent residents from having to use unheated amenities when temperatures drop. There's nothing worse than going to use a furnace on the first cold day of the fall, only to learn that it needs repairs.



Consider putting the property's common areas on a regularly scheduled HVAC maintenance plan to money in the long run.

### **Winterize the pool**

Preparing a [swimming pool](#) for winter is an essential job that extends its lifespan and prevents residents from trying to use it. You won't run the risk of homeowners attempting to swim in this facility if you take the time to close it properly.

Winterizing the swimming pool involves having a vendor clean the pumps and filters and turn them off for the season. You'll also want to place a cover over the top of the pool to prevent leaves and other debris from getting in. This makes it easier to reopen the pool in the spring.

Another step you can take is removing as many accessories as possible, including ladders, solar blankets, and cleaners, and putting them in a safe spot for the winter. It's advisable to have an expert balance the water's pH levels to ensure optimal levels, too.

Finally, if you live in an area where the water is likely to freeze, lowering the pool's water level before winter is essential. The reason is that this water will expand as it freezes, damaging the liner and leading to significant repairs in the spring.

### **Remove dead tree branches**

Heavy snowfall can lead to significant issues in a community. For example, as snow accumulates on the trees around the neighborhood, it can cause dead branches to collapse under the weight. This occurrence can be disastrous because of the damage these branches can do to homes and other structures around the community as they fall.

Property managers should take some time to wander the complex, noting any trees that look like they're [struggling](#) before winter. Dead branches are usually dry and brittle, and you might notice a lack of leaves growing on them earlier in the year. From there, you can speak with tree removal contractors about cutting these branches off in a controlled manner before the snow has the opportunity to do damage.

### **Turn off the outside water**

Freezing weather can cause issues for outdoor irrigation systems, so turning them off and blowing them out before winter comes is vital. In-ground sprinkler systems often incur damage in this way, as water remains in them from the summer and freezes in the winter. Hiring a contractor to remove the water from these systems prevents this damage and ensures they're operational the following year.



## Selecting contractors to help

Though snow can be a peaceful sight to see, it and other cold-weather staples can do real damage to structures and common areas in a community. Handling all cold-weather preparation jobs yourself probably isn't possible, particularly since many of them require specialized skills. For that reason, hiring vendors to winterize the HOAs you manage is essential as colder temperatures approach.

VendorSmart can put you in touch with contractors in your local area that offer the services you require. Our team of analysts also vets these vendors [for compliance](#), making it less likely you'll experience any issues with them. [Contact VendorSmart](#) today for more information.

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