

De-Winterizing Your Home Guide

Definitions:

Winterize – To prepare a homes plumbing system for colder winter months.

De-Winterize – To “charge” the plumbing system for everyday use.

Charge – To fill piping with water.

Many foreclosed homes that remain vacant will be most likely be “winterized”. This is to prevent damage due to freezing pipes in colder months. When the plumbing system is winterized its main purpose is to drain all the water from the system including the hot water heater.

When you’re purchasing a foreclosed home or a home that has been winterized, it’s very important to have all the utilities turned on prior to a Home Inspection. More importantly the plumbing system should be active and working to inspect for leaks.

Lets begin the process for “dewinterizing” the homes plumbing system.

I strongly recommend using compressed air to pressurize the system with an installed pressure gauge. This will determine if the system will indeed maintain the needed water pressure when the system is charged.

1. Prior to turning on any water to the home, remove all the aerators from the faucets. This includes the kitchen sink and all vanity sinks. Many times there will be build-up in the lines. By removing the aerators this will allow any build-up to drain from the system.



2. Open the supply valves under each sink, including the kitchen and bathrooms. Make sure the faucets handles are “closed”.

Also remember to check the supply line to the refrigerator. If not connected to the unit, make sure to close the valve at the supply line.



3. Open the supply valve at the hot water heater.



4. Prior to opening the valve at the water meter, go ahead and open an exterior hose bib. This will accomplish 2 things, it will give you a visual that the water is actually on and it will also relieve some of the pressure as you “charge” the line to the house.



5. Slowly open the valve at the water meter. Don't just “jerk” the valve open. Open the valve a quarter turn every 5-10 seconds. This won't “shock” the plumbing lines possibly causing a leak within the system.



6. Now that you can actually see the water coming from the exterior hose bib, go inside and verify that the water heater is filling with water. You can usually hear the tank filling.

Note: If this is an electrical water heater, DO NOT turn the power on to the tank until the tank is completely full.

7. Slowly turn the water on at each faucet in the home. This will purge any sediment and air from the system. Let the water run for several minutes to flush the lines. (10-20 minutes)

8. In the mean time, go to each toilet and slowly open the valve to the toilet. Let the toilet tank fill completely. Once filled, give the toilet a flush to ensure it is functioning.

This would also be a good time to turn the water on at each tub and shower fixture.



9. Now that each fixture has been turned on and water is actually coming through the fixtures, you can head back out to close the valve at the hose bib.

10. Ok, now we know that the water is turned on and “charged”. This is a perfect time to walk around the house and check for leaks. If you know that the water heater is full and all fixtures are turned off, go and check the water meter. Is it still turning? If so, you might have an active leak in the system.

Quickly check under sinks, at the water heater, the hose bibs and check the basement or crawlspace for leaks. Also remember to check the supply line for the refrigerator to make sure it’s not leaking.

If you can’t find an active leak after the system is known to be full and the meter is still turning, it’s possible that the supply line from the meter to the home is leaking. In this case it’s good to contact a local licensed plumber to locate the leak.

In the mean time, close the valve at the meter until the leak is located.

11. Finally, reinstall the aerators at each faucet.

12. Your plumbing system is dewinterized.

ASPEC Residential Services, LLC does not assume any liability, as far as, “de-winterizing” a property. For insurance purposes and liability reasons, we do not get involved in any “physical de-winterizing” procedures. We are a full time property inspection company, not a plumbing or winterizing service. However, we will help our clients/realtors in any way we can to assure that the procedures are done properly, in a timely manner, and by the appropriate personnel. Please, contact us with any questions or concerns, we are always here to help and educate.

Thank you,

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