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## HOW TO PROPERLY CLOSE UP YOUR CAMP

SHARE

By Coldwell Banker Rizzo Mattson, Realtors



If you do it right, closing your camp and preparing it for winter will make your life easier when you return in the spring. Here's how.

### Utilities: Water, Electricity, Phone, Gas, and Heat

**Water:** To prevent pipes from freezing, drain them instead of using antifreeze, which is toxic to ground and surface water and to pets. Adding antifreeze isn't necessary, provided you've completely drained all of the fixtures. If you can't do this, use low toxicity antifreeze to minimize potential harm.

Another option, if your cottage is well-insulated, is to keep your boiler and/or your radiant heating system at 40 degrees through the winter.

If your water source is from a town, contact the water department so they can turn your water off at the meter and drain the pipe leading to your camp.

Leave faucets open to prevent air locks. Drain the water heater; if it's electric, turn off the circuit breaker to prevent burning the element when it's empty. Drain the toilet tank, too. Depending on how extensive your water system is, you might also have to blow it out with an air compressor. For help, call a plumber.

**Electricity and Phone:** To cancel these services over the winter months, notify your providers, though it might cost more to have them reconnected later.

**Gas and Oil Heat:** Shut off gas at the tank. Have a licensed oil technician protect fuel oil tanks from ice or snow damage with a filter protector, so they won't leak fuel.

### Cleaning: Rooms and Appliances

**Appliances:** Unplug and clean all appliances and electronics. Remove batteries from clocks. Cover your smaller appliances to keep dust from settling on them. Completely remove food from your fridge and freezer. Fully wash and dry the interior, and leave the doors ajar to prevent odors and mildew from forming during the winter. Clean and dry your stove, too, so leftover, caked on food won't attract rodents and bugs.

**Rooms:** As you clean, check the crevasses of your couch and chairs and under cushions for stray food particles. Clean cabinets and cupboards. Cover furniture and mattresses, launder any clothing and linens you're leaving behind, and store them. Also, clean anything you clean with - vacuums with food bits, mops with organic matter, etc. become breeding grounds for bacteria and will attract insects and other pests. To prevent fires, remove paper, newspapers, old rags, and chemicals. Hazardous chemicals, such as cleaning products, and pesticides can freeze and explode when temperatures drop.

### Security: Locks, Holes, Windows, Flues, and Chimneys

**Flues and Stove Pipes:** Block or close them. Seal them with a metal cap to keep birds away.

**Inside and Outside the Cottage or Cabin:** To prevent uninvited guests, inspect the building inside and out -- including your chimneys -- to make sure there are no openings. Seal any holes or cracks - stuff small holes with steel wool. Disconnect hoses from outside pipes to prevent the pipes from freezing, swelling, and breaking.

**Windows:** Lock and close windows. Pull down shades and close blinds. Shutter or board up windows to prevent breakage and to protect the house from intruders and cold weather. Plywood or thin sheet metal will do. Place handles on the outside of them and number the pieces to make next year's close easier.

**Security:** Lock all doors. If you're concerned about intruders, deadbolts are an option as is hiring a year-round resident to keep watch for you. Also, if you don't already have them, consider installing motion detector lights.

### Repairs and Other Details

**Repairs:** To prevent damage over the winter, make sure you finish any repairs before the snow flies.

**Other Details:** Forward your mail to your permanent address. Make sure your service contacts, like plumbers and electricians, know how to reach you.

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## Soil and Shoreline, Furniture, Boats, and the Dock

**Soil and Shoreline:** Stabilize any eroding areas with vegetation or rock riprap. Anything more than minor maintenance and repair near the shoreline may require local and/or state permits, so contact your town's code enforcement officer or call the Maine Department of Environmental Protection at 1-800-452-1942 for help.

**Boats:** Turn small boats upside down and open any drain holes, making sure they're on the downhill side of any slope.

Don't drain gasoline from fuel tanks of outboard motors or other power equipment. Instead, use fuel stabilizer (available from your dealer or auto parts store) to keep fuel fresh for next season. Winterize engines away from water. When changing lubricating oils, collect the oil and bring it to your dealer or a recycling facility for proper disposal. Wash boats away from the water, preferably at a commercial car wash. Many detergents and motor oils contain chemicals that can pollute open waters and harm fish.

**Furniture:** Clean all outside furniture, gather it together, secure it, and cover it or take it inside.

**The Dock:** Remove it or install circulating pumps to prevent it from freezing in ice.

### Sources:

- Laflamme, William. Maine DEP: Closing your Camp with Care.
- Maine.gov: Closing Camp While Protecting the Lake
- Palmisano, Joanne. HomeAway: Closing Your Summer Cottage for the Season
- Speculator Living: Packing Up for Winter? Here are a Few Camp-Closing Pointers
- Winnipiesaukee Forum: Camp Open/Camp Close

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