



Prepare your holiday home for winter

For most people, the holiday home is a symbol of freedom and relaxation. Here are a few top tips on what to do in the autumn to avoid unnecessary damage.

TURN OFF THE WATER

Freezing temperatures are the biggest reason why water pipes, toilets, water heaters and so on break and cause water damage in holiday homes. When your holiday home is unoccupied, you should:

- Turn off the water mains stop tap and open all other taps, drain the water system of water
- Flush the toilet one last time to empty the cistern
- Drain pumps and water tanks
- Pour eco-friendly and non-toxic antifreeze into the traps beneath washbasins, sinks, floor drains and flush toilets
- Drain all taps – remember that horizontal shower and bath mixer taps are particularly difficult to drain fully

DO YOU HAVE HEATING ON INDOORS ALL YEAR ROUND?

If your holiday home is kept heated during the winter you should:

- Set the indoor temperature to no less than +15°C
- Pour non-toxic antifreeze into water containers
- Regularly check on the house.

COLD INDOORS

- Turn off the electricity using the main switch – as an extra safety measure, you can also remove the fuses
- Remove plugs from wall sockets and store all outdoor cables indoors for the winter
- Switch off the fridge/freezer. The doors should be left open to avoid stale smells – a good tip is to drape a cloth over the top of the doors so they can't close

VENTILATE

Whether or not the house is heated during the winter, it is important that the indoor air is able to circulate. Good ventilation helps to avoid mould and damp in walls and so on. The air remains almost still when the temperature is the same inside and out. Open the building's vents, doors and cupboards so the air can circulate everywhere.

PREVENT BREAK-INS AND THEFT

Don't leave items that are particularly attractive to thieves in your holiday home over winter. This can encourage break-ins and damage that may cause considerable distress and unnecessary costs. Tempting items for thieves include TVs and stereos, alcohol and firearms. Having approved locks and alarm systems will make break-ins more difficult and less attractive.

BLOCK OFF HOLES

A mouse needs a hole of just 6–7 mm to get in, and for a rat it's around 2 cm. Block holes off with a stainless-steel mesh. The mesh holes should be a maximum of 5 mm and the thickness of the wire should be at least 0.7 mm.

CLEAN THOROUGHLY

Dirt and food remains can start to turn mouldy. It's therefore a good idea to end the autumn with a thorough clean. Clean out the toaster and empty the steam iron and coffee machine.

OUTDOOR

Outdoors too you can prevent damage as follows:

- Clear the gutters of leaves and dirt
- Cover the chimney to avoid snow entering
- Channel water away from the house by placing guttering under the downpipes
- Check that doors and windows are fully intact
- Check that all the locks work
- Bring in water hoses and power cables
- Place outdoor furniture somewhere under cover where they are still aired
- Block any holes in the walls and foundations, so mice and rats can't get in
- Regularly check on the house