



# Heading Home for the Holidays?

## Simple steps to protect your chapter house in your absence

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Finals are coming to an end, and it is time to go home for the holidays! Before you leave, be sure to prepare the chapter house for the extended break. The house needs to be protected against cold weather. In addition, the absence of brothers increases the threat of vandalism or theft. The following list will help ensure that the chapter house is prepared to weather the storm:

### Interior

- Thoroughly clean the chapter house and remove all perishable foods.
- Inspect each room and unplug non-essential appliances and electronics.
- Store chapter and personal property in a secured area.
- Confirm that heat registers are not blocked and that combustible materials are safely stored (not next to or in the same room as the furnace or boiler).
- Set the thermostat at no less than 60°F/16°C and leave the furnace on.
- Leave indoor faucets slightly open to allow for a trickle of water--this may protect piping that is exposed or cannot be properly insulated.
- Leave open the doors to cabinets that contain water lines as this will allow heat to enter the area.
- Utilize the assistance of a qualified heating service company to inspect the furnace, hot water heater, exposed water lines and drain pipes for slow leaks.

HVAC contractor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

- Repair any broken exterior doors or windows, which cause heat loss. Make sure they are properly insulated and that they close and latch completely.
- If a fireplace has been used, be sure to clean out the coals and close the flue. If it has not already been done, have the fireplace and chimney serviced and cleaned.

### Exterior

- Remove (and store) all hoses from exterior spigots and faucets.
- Inspect all gutters and drains for debris, which might interfere with runoff and proper drainage.
- Attach and secure downspouts with an extension away from the foundation in order to prevent water damage. Additionally, ensure that the water is not draining into the driveway, sidewalks or patios.
- Lock all windows and doors.

### In your absence

- Contact your chapter advisor, house corporation officer or a reliable caretaker to make a twice-weekly inspection of the chapter house during the holidays.
- During each visit, the chapter house should be inspected to confirm no loss has occurred, that the furnace is operating and that the premise is secure and all walkways are clear of snow, ice and debris.
- Arrange for the pick up of any mail that may be delivered to the chapter house, or contact you local post office to place mail delivery on hold.
- Contact the newspaper and stop delivery while you are away.
- Alert university or city police to the vacancy of the chapter house. Ask that they make regular patrols and checks of the property to prevent vandalism or theft.

These items are a good start as you lock up the house for the holiday season. However, there may be other necessary steps to ensure the safety of the chapter house. Contact your house corporation or university physical plant officials to assist you.



# Are You Ready for Summer Vacation?

## Simple steps to protect your chapter house in your absence

You've worked hard all semester, final exams are approaching, and thoughts of summer are not far behind. In the midst of your end-of-semester studies and celebrations, don't forget to prepare your home-away-from-home for the summer months. Your chapter house may have few or no residents during the break, so take the time to secure the property inside and out. You'll increase the chances that in the fall you and your brothers will return to a house ready to use, untouched by vandals, with its contents intact. Here is a checklist you can use to help ensure that your house will be in tip-top, ready-for-recruitment condition when you return.

- Conduct room inspections and document any existing damage.
- Make repairs, upgrades or schedule other maintenance; the summer months are a good time to replace things like cracked windows or to repair a chronically leaking roof.
- Collect and label any keys to the house or other secure areas that were distributed during the academic year.
- Follow your house corporation's specifications regarding the leasing of chapter-house space to summer tenants.
- Stop newspaper delivery.
- Arrange to have your mail forwarded a few weeks in advance of your departure. You can visit your local post office or [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) to set this up. Are there any other services that could be temporarily discontinued in your absence?
- Notify the police, fire department and your security company of the vacancy dates and provide them with emergency contact information.
- Test the smoke alarms; make sure fire extinguishers are properly charged (follow the factory guidelines) and test the security system.
- Tell your neighbors that the building will be vacant or have fewer residents.
- Secure windows with locks and/or security bars, pull down the window shades and close the drapes or blinds.
- Store and secure expensive items in one location, either in a storage room or a room that can be securely locked; this includes TVs, stereos, VCRs, DVD players and computers. Also include irreplaceable chapter memorabilia and Ritual regalia.
- Hire a professional to check and service your air conditioner, boiler, furnace and water heater. Consider lowering the thermostat on the water heater until the house is occupied again.
- Place the exterior house lights on automatic timers and/or install motion detectors.
- Unplug major appliances and equipment in the kitchen and throughout the house. Shut off the water source to the hoses that attach to the washing machine to guard against flooding.
- Unplug and move smaller appliances to a secure location.
- Remove perishable food from the refrigerator and cabinets; thoroughly clean the shelves, insides of drawers, refrigerator shelves, grease spills in the oven, etc. The odor of spoiling food will attract pests.
- Inspect plumbing fixtures for leaks and call a professional if repairs are needed.
- Secure or store outdoor items that could tempt thieves or vandals.
- Clear and clean drainage spouts and gutters along the roof to prevent overflows and pooled rainwater around the base of the house.
- Drain, remove and store garden hoses.
- Arrange for someone to maintain your lawn.
- In what other ways can your chapter house be prepared for the summer months to promote safety and to deter vandalism and trespassing?

Following these steps will help ensure that the property will remain safe and secure, and serious damage will be prevented while you are away this summer. Also, it will make the chapter house one you'll look forward to returning to in the fall.