

## *Is Your Sprinkler System Ready For The Winter?*

Almost every building in the United States is subject to severe winter weather. Buildings in the northern and central parts of the country may be more at risk, but the south is not exempt from ice storms and arctic blasts. Actually, recent history shows that areas most vulnerable to damage are those in the southern portions of the country because they are not used to long periods of freezing temperatures. For these reasons, it is critical that every facility prepare for winter weather. Part of this preparation **MUST** include the fire protection systems.

As you might expect, the most common types of sprinkler problems during the winter months are freezing water in pipes. Two problems are most prevalent: water accumulating in dry pipe sprinkler systems from the compressed air in the sprinkler pipes or from water not thoroughly drained from past trip tests, and inadequately heated portions of wet pipe sprinkler systems. The following checklist focuses on these two issues. It is designed for a building owner, or responsible party, to supplement an existing sprinkler system maintenance program. It is not designed to be all-inclusive, or a replacement for regular inspection, testing and maintenance of fire protection equipment.

### **Winter Weather Preparedness Checklist**

#### **Wet Pipe Sprinkler Systems**

- Ensure that the building shell is in good condition; close up any unnecessary openings
- Maintain building heat at a minimum of 40°F in all normally heated areas and any area with a wet pipe sprinkler system
- Check coldest points of building to ensure temperature is at least 40°F (i.e., eaves, over shipping doors, spaces without direct heat)
- Consider low temperature alarms in areas where heat is suspect
- Identify vulnerable areas, such as crawl spaces, attics, and above suspended ceilings, where water piping pass through and provide a way for heat to reach these areas
- Place thermostats and/or low temperature alarms at strategic locations to monitor building temperature
- Check insulation in attic areas or other areas near wet pipe sprinkler pipes.

***Fire Protection Systems must be maintained on an ongoing basis. If qualified personnel have not recently serviced your sprinkler system, please call or email Atlanta Sprinkler Inspection at 770-867-5788 or [bobby@atlantasprinkler.com](mailto:bobby@atlantasprinkler.com).***

***Direct any sprinkler related questions to Atlanta Sprinkler Inspection.***

### **Dry Pipe Sprinkler Systems**

- Maintain heat in dry pipe valve rooms, fire pump rooms and all areas protected by wet pipe sprinkler systems, at a minimum of 40°F.
- Heaters should be thermostatically controlled. Use of portable heaters is discouraged.
- Drain all low point drains weekly during freezing weather. Have additional drains installed if necessary.
- Have air leaks repaired to keep system from tripping if compressor power is lost.
- Air supplied to the compressor should come from a dry, room-temperature source. If this is not possible, or moisture build-up is a problem, consider installing an air dryer or using nitrogen instead of air.
- Have the pitch checked on any pipes where the pipe or hangers have been hit, altered, or appear sagging.

### **Other items to consider in preparing for winter weather conditions:**

#### **Hydrants, Control Valves and Fire Department Connections**

- Check private hydrant fittings for tightness.
- For areas prone to significant snow, identify hydrants with flags or markers located above the average snow line.
- Check around hydrants and post indicator valves for soft or wet ground. This is an indication of a leaky underground piping and should be further assessed.
- Ensure all control valves are in their normal operating position and secure from tampering.
- Check fire department connections for accessibility. Keep clear by shoveling away snow to access connections.

#### **Antifreeze systems**

- Have antifreeze solution checked for mix strength.

#### **Gravity and Suction Tanks**

- Flush heaters, water circulating equipment and piping
- Turn on heaters and water circulating equipment and monitor equipment throughout winter months

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