

## Consumers Energy Shares Tips to Safely Maintain Vacation Homes during Winter Months

JACKSON, Mich., Aug. 29, 2016 – Labor Day signals the unofficial end to summer, and for many Michigan residents it is also the time when vacation homes are closed for the winter. Consumers Energy recommends several tips to help ensure these homes stay safe when unoccupied during the cold weather.



“We are fortunate Michigan offers such beautiful venues for vacation homes like cottages and cabins. Whether it is nestled along the shoreline of one of our many lakes or waterways, or located on wooded property, following some simple tips can help ensure a cottage remains safe and intact while you’re away,” said Charles Crews, vice president of gas operations for Consumers Energy.

Water, wind and animal-related damages typically occur during the winter and early spring months, and are among the top claims for vacation home damage. Some tips to help avoid these and other damages:

- Shut off the water supply, then drain pipes, hot water tanks and sewer traps to help avoid pipe freezing. Alternatively, place antifreeze designed for RVs or another environmentally friendly variety into empty toilet bowls to help protect lines.
- If there is a fireplace or woodstove, give it a thorough cleaning and close the damper flue. Remove debris from the chimney opening and consider installing a cover to help prevent animals from nesting inside. In the spring, visually inspect the chimney to be sure no debris has collected.
- Store outside décor such as lawn chairs, tables, and barbecue grills in a secure location to avoid the possibility of property damage during harsh winter and spring

storm winds. Disconnect propane tanks from grills and store in an appropriate safe location.

- Thoroughly clean the kitchen and remove any food. During winter months, rodents and other animals can sniff out food and cause damage in an attempt to get to it. Sealing all home entry points with expandable foam is a good way to help keep critters out.
- Consider making arrangements to have a local snow removal company come at least once during the winter to remove any snow or ice build-up on driveways and walkways in case emergency access is needed. Also arrange for removal of snow and ice accumulations from roofs to avoid potential damage due to the added weight.

Two other important safety tips Crews offered:

- Unplug all electrical appliances and electronic devices when the home is not in use.
- Install audible smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are on every level of the home to protect against fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest utility, is the principal subsidiary of CMS Energy (NYSE: CMS), providing natural gas and electricity to 6.7 million of the state's 10 million residents in all 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

###

*Media Contacts: Debra Dodd, 586-918-0597, or Terry DeDoes, 517-374-2159*

*For more information about Consumers Energy, go to [www.ConsumersEnergy.com](http://www.ConsumersEnergy.com).*

**Check out Consumers Energy on Social Media**

