

Put Safety First for Wintery Weather

A heavy load of snow and ice may not only damage your roof, it can also cause damage to your building, awnings, and equipment. After a snow storm, inspect your roof and awnings from the ground. Snow removal can be a dangerous job, so don't attempt to remove it yourself. Snow falling from awnings can also be a hazard to visitors entering your building, so it's a good idea to contact a contractor in advance of inclement weather and outline your expectations for early snow removal.

Pipes are another concern during frigid temperatures. Keep pipes from freezing or bursting by:

- Continuing to heat your building while it is unoccupied, especially for long periods of time.
- Insulating any exposed pipes.
- Letting faucets drip so that a trickle of water continues to move through the pipes.
- Opening doors to unheated rooms with exposed pipes to distribute heat from other areas. Hiring a plumber to inspect pipes prior to the start of the winter season is the best preventive measure.

Electric space heaters are a popular choice as temperatures fall. Used incorrectly, they can quickly turn into a fire or burn hazard. Follow these recommendations for the safe use of portable heaters.

- Place heaters on the floor at least three feet from objects such as curtains, papers, and furniture. Never place heaters on furniture.
- Never leave a space heater unsupervised when children are present.
- Do not use heaters in wet or moist places, such as bathrooms. Corrosion or other damage in the heater may lead to a fire or shock hazard.
- Do not hide cords under rugs or carpets. Placing anything on top of the cord can cause the cord to overheat, leading to a fire.
- Do not use an extension cord with a space heater.
- Be sure the plug fits snugly into the outlet. If the plug feels hot, unplug the heater and have a qualified repair shop check for problems.
- Broken heaters should be repaired by a qualified service center. Do not attempt to repair, adjust, or replace parts yourself.
- Do not use portable electric heaters manufactured prior to 1991. New heaters have safety enhancements to prevent burn injuries and reduce the risk of fire.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.