



## UTILITIES

One of the questions we're asked fairly frequently in short sale situations is "if I vacate my home, should I shut off the utilities?"

### **Advantages to shutting off your utilities\* when you vacate:**

- All utilities: You will not have to pay the utility bill.
- Water: There can be no unexpected flooding caused by a worn or broken parts.

### **Disadvantages to shutting off your utilities when you vacate:**

- HVAC (electricity or gas)
  - If you live in an extreme climate it may be so hot in summer or so cold in winter in the house that potential buyers will want to leave it quickly without giving it a thorough examination.
- All Utilities:
  - When your house is inspected by a buyer, he will want to have the utilities turned on for the inspection.
  - If it is an FHA or VA mortgage being used by your buyer he must have the utilities on for the appraisal
- Electricity
  - See HVAC above, if applicable
  - If your house has a sump pump, turning off the electricity will mean that the sump pump will not work, and that in turn could cause the flooding of your home if it has not been winterized\*\*. That can be very expensive to remedy. Worst case scenario is that the flooding is not discovered for some time, giving mold the opportunity to take over the home.
- Water

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  - The primary disadvantage to turning off your water when you vacate is that it will have to be turned on for inspections.

Metro1 Realty is a real estate brokerage operating in Kentucky and Indiana, assisting clients buy, sell, trade, rent and manage residential and commercial real estate. It is located at 12504 Nassau Lane, Louisville, Kentucky and can be reached by phone at 502-254-9600, by fax at 866-463-4123. Its principal broker/owner is Neil Blumberg whose email address is [neilblumberg@gmail.com](mailto:neilblumberg@gmail.com).

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## Notes

### **If you do shut off your utilities:**

- Make sure your realtor has provided for this in the sales contract - you don't want to be in breach of contract
- Either you can switch them on again or you give the buyer to have them switched on for a few days for purposes of the inspection. Depending on the utility company you're dealing with, there may be money that has to be paid or deposited.
- If it is an FHA or VA buyer, when you switch the utilities on temporarily, remember to keep them on after the home inspection until the appraisal is completed. And you may want to keep them on until after the FHA or VA appraisal has been received in case the appraiser has to re-inspect if he required a matter relating to utilities to be fixed.

### **Winterization Considerations**

- Winterizing is performed when a house is vacant and the temperatures are expected to reach below freezing during the vacancy. The process of winterizing will involve fully purging the home's plumbing system of water. This includes emptying the water heater, draining all of the piping, and filling the various fixtures with an anti-freeze solution.
- The major issue protected against is freezing water in pipes. The problem with freezing water in pipes is that water, in the form of ice expands when it freezes. And that can cause ruptures in the pipes and faucets. But it isn't the expanding ice itself that causes a rupture. The ice expanding downstream towards a faucet that's been turned off causes a build-up of water pressure in the copper pipes and like a soda can put in the freezer too long, the pipes will burst due to the massive increase in water pressure. This usually occurs near a faucet where there is a weak joint or piece of pipe and not upstream towards the water meter. Much more serious is when the pipes burst behind walls - then the drywall must be ripped out to look for the leak. When completed, the house can now safely sit empty with no utilities, specifically, no heat.
- However, for a home inspector, winterization will mean that no inspection of the plumbing-related components of the house can be completed. So a winterized house will have to be de-winterized for the inspection (water turned on and pipes and hot water heater filled) and then re-winterized after the inspection to protect the house again.

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