



The UK trade body for the caravan, motorhome, caravan holiday and park home industry.

Code of Practice

Winterisation of a Caravan Holiday Home Or Holiday Lodge

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Foreword

This code of practice has been drawn up by the NCC to provide winterisation recommendations that Park Operator members should adhere to when preparing a Caravan Holiday Home for the winter period.

The NCC has produced this Code of Practice in partnership with the Caravan Holiday and Park Home Technical Committee.

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The NCC is the UK trade body for the caravan, motorhome, caravan holiday and park home industries and was founded in 1939. Membership encompasses all sides of the industry, manufacturers, dealers, park owners and specialist suppliers of products and services.

The NCC founded and is now a key member of the European Caravan Federation, which promotes and strengthens the interests and influence of the industry within the European Community.

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Winterisation of a Caravan Holiday Home

When Caravan Holiday Homes are not occupied during the winter period, it is recommended that either the park operator or home owner winterise and prepare the home accordingly. The NCC recommends winterising the home when the home will be left empty for more than a few days during a cold period.

This issue was raised at the recent quarterly Technical Committee and the advice given is to follow the home manufacturer's specific recommendations with regard to winterisation and draining down. This information can be found in the home manufacturers manual or handbook supplied with the home. If that is not available we recommend contacting the manufacturer directly to ask for specific information relating to that model.

As each manufacturer gives slightly different recommendations the NCC are unable to give specific recommendations that will cover all manufacturers. Therefore we would like to give our park operator members some generic advice to help with their winterisation processes.

The advice from the NCC technical committee is that the winterisation procedure should be performed by a competent individual who has read and understood both this Code of Practice and the specific winterisation guidelines set out in the home manufacturer's handbook which could vary from model to model.

Security

Ensure all windows and doors are properly shut before leaving the home for the last time. Ensure that the locks are utilised on any windows or doors with locks and that the keys are stored in a safe place. Ensure that televisions and other electrical and electronic items are unplugged from the wall sockets and, if possible, either removed from the home or hidden out of view. If storing these items in the home over the winter please ensure they are not kept in damp areas. Leave all the curtains open – this means that anyone looking in will see the home has been cleared of valuable items.

Central Heating Systems

Central heating systems that use normal domestic style radiators are typically pressurised or already have anti-freeze within the system. These must not be drained, however we do recommend regular maintenance by a qualified heating engineer and anti-freeze levels should be checked by the engineer prior to the winter vacancy period.

It is recommended that the annual gas safety check should include checking the antifreeze/inhibitor level within the central heating system.

External Supplies and drain down points

The following should only be performed by a competent person who is familiar with the plumbing and the gas systems fitted to the home.

Both the gas supply and the water supply should be turned off at the source before beginning any drain down procedures.

It has been recommended by NCC members to disconnect the water supply from the caravan completely at this stage, as this prevents water from getting into the caravan and damaging the interior should a valve split due to external cold temperatures.

The drain off points for the central heating system should be left as these systems should be charged with antifreeze and, as such, should not be drained down.

Any external domestic water drainage plugs underneath the home should then be opened as should all taps within the home. The drain off points and taps should be left open until the water is to be reinstated after the winter period.

Some manufacturers recommend using a compressed air supply to “blow through” the pipe work at this stage. However not all home manufacturers recommend or approve this, so check the handbook that comes with the home or contact the manufacturer directly if you are unsure.

Gas Systems

When winterising the home, the gas system should be isolated at the supply for that home, be it at the LPG cylinder, meter box, or tank. Regulator hoses must be checked before the system is turned back on again.

Towards the beginning of the holiday season is an ideal time to get a Gas Safe registered engineer to perform the annual checks on the system and to service the gas appliances fitted to the home. This is a mandatory requirement of Regulation 36 of the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998, for Landlords.

Inside the home

As well as turning on all the taps and leaving them open to ensure there is no water left in the system, we recommend adding a small amount of salt or anti-freeze into any remaining water in the toilets as well as any water traps in baths or showers. We recommend the use of a funnel if necessary. However do not let the salt or anti-freeze get in contact with any metallic components as this could cause damage if left for a long period of time. Ensure that all plugholes in sinks, basins and showers are left unobstructed and that all internal taps are left open throughout the winterised period.

Toilets should be flushed once the water system has been turned off (or disconnected) to ensure there is no water left in the bottom of the cistern that could freeze and crack the cistern in cold temperatures. If possible put a small amount of anti-freeze into the water left in the bottom of the cistern that cannot be removed by flushing.

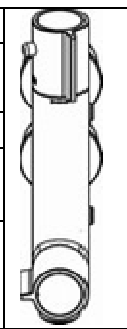
Water heaters (rather than boilers and central heating systems) may or may not be drained depending on the manufacturer and model. It is best to check the manual or handbook for the water heater unit and follow the relevant instructions for the winterisation process.

Combi Boilers should be drained and winterised as per the boiler manufacturers' instructions.

Thermostatic Mixing Valves (TMV's) on baths and showers

To prevent winter damage to the temperature sensitive components inside the bath or shower mixing valves many TMV manufacturers recommend draining the TMV. If the TMV layout differs from the following, check the manual that came with the home or any separate relevant documentation that relates to the bath or shower unit.

To drain Thermostatic mixer:

1. Close hot and cold mains feed taps.	
2. Remove the shower hose from the mixer or lay the shower head and hose in the shower tray to drain off any trapped water.	
3. Turn bottom tap valve fully open.	
4. Turn the top thermostat valve fully clockwise to drain cold water, until water stops flowing.	
5. Push in the red temperature set button on the top thermostat valve and turn fully anticlockwise to drain the hot water side until the water stops flowing.	

Note

If after the drain down procedure, the Thermostatic Mixer Tap is to be left for long periods in cold or freezing conditions, leave the tap open and line up the ridge on the thermostat hand wheel with the letter "H" etched on the tap body. This will leave the hot and cold sides of the tap partially open to help prevent frost damage.

Be aware that some TMV's may be hidden behind panels in showers or behind panels in the neighbouring room to the bathroom. These need to be accessed and drained too.

Appliances

The NCC recommends that appliances should be winterised following the manufacturer's specific instructions. If unsure it is best practice to contact the appliance manufacturer's technical department to ask whether the appliance should be winterised or not and if so what process to follow.

This is particularly important if the home has a fridge/freezer with ice making facilities. In this instance the ice making unit needs to be drained down and the filter removed. Follow the fridge/freezer manufacturer's recommendations

NCC Members have recommended that washing machines and dishwashers should be turned off at the isolation valve and disconnected from the system completely. Otherwise follow the appliance manufacturer's specific instructions.

General Winter Care

- Turn off the electric supply.
- Remove soft furnishings and curtains to protect from damp or store them in the home where air can circulate around them.
- Ensure all fixed ventilation is not obstructed.
- Leave all internal doors, wardrobes and cupboard doors ajar to allow an uninterrupted flow of air to circulate throughout the interior.
- Clean and empty the fridge and freezer and wedge open the door.
- Remove all foodstuffs from the fridge, freezer and cupboards to avoid attracting vermin.
- Check all windows and doors are tightly closed and ensure nothing is trapped in them.
- Ensure any loose items are safely secured.

- Smoke alarms should be tested by pressing the test button as well as cleaned free of any dust and dirt.
- Carbon Monoxide alarms should be checked that the battery light is still flashing occasionally (this shows there is still power in the battery) and also cleaned free of any dust and dirt.

Lubrication Schedules

It is important to carry out a full lubrication schedule of the home, at least on a yearly basis – this includes:

- Corner steadies – clean, grease and wind each of the corner steadies through its full movement. Do one of these at a time for safety reasons.
- Hitch-head – clean and grease all moving parts as necessary.
- Lubricate door hinges, locks, window catches and skylight mechanisms with a small amount of petroleum jelly – this will also prevent moisture getting in.
- Be aware that the wheel hubs are packed with grease on assembly and do not need any further lubrication.

The Home Exterior

- Check the underneath of the home for any rust patches. These should be removed using a wire brush. Apply primer before repainting with suitable dark colour paint.
- Tyres should be maintained at the recommended pressure given on the tyre sidewall. Please ensure that the correct safety equipment, such as a safety cage for the wheel, is used when re-inflating tyres.
- Do not cover the home with tarpaulins or plastic sheets as this will attract damp which may damage the exterior of the home.
- Clean and check the gutters and down pipes of the home for obstructions and blockages. However never walk on or place heavy objects on the roof of the home.
- We also recommend washing and polishing the exterior panels always following the manufacturers' instructions on how to do so.