

Your Yard

Getting Sprinklers Ready for Winter

(NAPSA)—To make sure your lawn will be ready to grow come spring, it's important to make sure winter's deep freeze doesn't do irreparable damage—to the grass or, just as importantly, to your sprinkler system.

While in-ground irrigation systems are vulnerable to colder conditions, there are several simple steps you can take to make sure yours is ready to weather the change in season.

If your sprinkler system runs on an automatic timer, shutting down the controller is a key part of getting ready for winter. Many systems have a "rain" or "off" mode that shuts off the signals to the valves. Even though the sprinkler doesn't turn on—because the valves are not active—the system retains all programming information (start times, valve run times, etc.) and continues to keep time. Another option is to shut off the power to the controller; however, this generally wipes out any programming information that may be stored in the system, so it will need to be reprogrammed once the ground starts to thaw.

Next, shut off the water supply. And while you're at it, be sure to protect the main shutoff valve by wrapping it with insulation (foam insulation tape and a plastic bag). If you don't have a main shutoff valve, it can be a good, preventive investment. Meanwhile, above-ground pipes also need to be insulated. Most home supply stores sell self-sticking foam-insulating tape and foam-insulating tubes for this task.



Both lawns and sprinkler systems need protection against winter weather.

If the cold is coming your way, it's essential to remove water from the pipes and sprinklers so that the water doesn't freeze and cause pipes to burst. Manual drain valves, automatic drain valve and the compressed air blowout method are the three most common ways to drain pipes. An irrigation specialist can help you get the job done while protecting you and your lawn against potential safety risks.

Backflow preventers and valves also need insulation if they are above ground. The insulation tape used for the main shutoff valve can be used on this equipment as well, but don't block the air vents or drain outlets.

Before you attempt to winterize your irrigation system, it can pay to consult an irrigation specialist such as those at Rain Bird. For additional irrigation tips or information, visit www.rainbird.com or call 1-800-RAINBIRD.