



**CHARLOTTE FIRE DEPARTMENT  
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE  
Fire Prevention Bureau**

Code/Procedural Interpretation

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**CFD Interpretation: Fire Sprinkler Service in Vacant Buildings**

**Date:** June 9, 2014

**Code Reference:** North Carolina Fire Code, Section 311 and Section 901

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**Subject:**

Can fire sprinklers in a vacant building be taken out of service during the winter months to prevent freezing?

**Interpretation:**

Yes, with some stipulations. The fire code does allow fire sprinklers in vacant buildings to be taken out of service during winter months provided that:

1. The building is completely cleared of *all* storage.
2. The building's openings (doors, windows, etc.) are safeguarded to prevent unauthorized entry.
3. The fire department connection (FDC) remains operable and unobstructed to allow the fire department to manually supply the system.
4. The fire code official is notified in advance of the impairment.

It is important to note that, if in the opinion of the fire official, special circumstances exist such as type of construction, impeded access, separation distance from adjoining property, etc. that would create an unusual hazard, the fire sprinklers may be required to remain in service.