



Facilities Management

Dry Systems/Low Point Drainage

This winter, municipal administrators and facility managers must be proactive in addressing the increased risk of freeze-ups and water damage to drainage systems. Dry sprinkler systems, often installed in unheated areas, rely on low-point drains to prevent water accumulation and freezing. These risks are particularly heightened during unoccupied hours or extended breaks, such as weekends, holidays, or school breaks, when heating systems may be lowered and staff may not be on-site. Without proper maintenance and labeling of these drains, water can remain in the pipes, freezing and causing significant damage.



Loss Lessons Learned: Water damage from freeze-ups in dry sprinkler systems remains an expensive and preventable loss type for MIIA members. Our loss data has shown two common root causes. When low point drains are not properly maintained or labeled, residual water can freeze, leading to pipe failures and significant repair costs. A second cause is improper sloping of the sprinkler pipes. The resulting water damage can be extensive, requiring costly remediation and disrupting municipal operations.

Steps to Protect Your Facilities: To help you prepare for the upcoming winter, MIIA has developed a comprehensive [Technical Guidance Document](#) that outlines essential steps to protect your drainage systems and prevent freeze-ups. The guidance provides clear instructions for actions to take before, during, and after the onset of extreme cold weather, including:

- Inspecting and labeling all low point drains in unheated areas to ensure they are clearly marked for easy identification.
- Reviewing system blueprints or diagrams to locate and track maintenance for all drainage points.
- Scheduling professional inspections if your facility lacks the internal capacity to inspect drainage systems, especially dry sprinkler systems.
- Performing a thorough drainage inspection before extended breaks or downtime, ensuring that all systems are fully drained to prevent freeze-ups.

For complete details on the steps to protect your facilities, please refer to the linked [Technical Guidance Document](#). In addition, some of these practices may be eligible for MIIA Rewards credit, and the tools may be eligible for a MIIA Risk Management or Flex Grant. Please discuss with your Risk Manager for further details.

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