

Cottage Opening Tips

Opening the cottage is the most exciting part of the year. It can also be the most stressful. Proper planning for the cottage opening weekend will help get the season off to a great start.

Spring Opening Checklist

It is important to make detailed checklists for the things you need to look after when opening up the cabin in the spring. This includes the chores you have to do before you leave the city, and the steps you have to follow once you arrive at the lake. It takes a bit of extra time in the beginning but being organized will ensure that the process goes smoothly.

Before You Drive to the Lake

There are a number of things you have to organize before you actually drive up to the lake to open the cabin. While they may seem obvious, it is best to write them down and check them off once they are done.

- Call the electricity company and phone company to turn your services back on.
- Check that all insurance documents are up to date on the cottage, boat, and trailer.
- Organize your keys, tools, cleaning supplies, clothing, filters, batteries, and food.
- Check the weather forecast.

Things to Do When You Arrive at the Lake

Survey the property and inspect the inside of the cottage for damage. Make notes.

Outside and Property Checklist

- Power lines
- Phone Lines
- Trees
- Roof
- Chimney Stack
- Deck
- Dock
- Siding
- Windows
- Screens
- Under the cottage – posts, pads, beams

Checklist for Inside the Cabin

- Inspect cupboards, closets, dressers for mice and their business cards.
- Inspect the ceiling for water leaks.

Note: Leave the water heater breaker OFF! Only switch on the breaker for the lights.

Water System Start-Up

How do you turn on the water system at the cottage?

Priming the cottage water system and getting it up and running are the main concerns when we do

our spring opening routine. Some cottages have pumps that are permanently submersed in the lake while others have a pump that sits under the cottage or in a pump house close to the water.

The following steps are for a typical land-based pump.

- Inspect all water lines for obvious damage. (The less obvious problems will show themselves shortly)
- Install a new water filter at the pump.
- Connect your hand pump to the water pump priming valve. (If you don't have a hand pump to draw water from the lake you will have to manually fill the water line.)
- Open the priming valve.
- Draw water from the lake into the line using the hand pump until it fills the line to and including the pump.
- Close the priming valve.
- Open a cold water tap in the cottage.
- Make sure the cold water valve leading into the hot water tank is closed.
- Switch on the water pump at the electrical panel box.
- Open all other valves that may be between the pump and the cottage.
- Open all cold water taps to push out the remaining air in the lines.
- Inspect all water lines for leaks. Listen for "hissing" sounds.
- Close all taps.
- Watch the pump to make sure it holds its pressure and is not running when the taps are all closed.

Note: If the pump continues to lose pressure and runs when the taps are closed, there is a leak somewhere.

Hot Water Tank

How to turn on the water tank at the cabin.

Once the water system is turned on, it is time to fill the hot water tank. Make sure you follow all the steps in the correct order.

- Make sure the hot water tank breaker is OFF.
- Close all taps.
- Close the cold water intake valve for the tank. (It should already be closed)
- Connect a hose to the drainage valve on the tank and run it outside.
- Open the drainage valve.

Note: It normally opens by turning it counter-clockwise.

- Open a hot water tap. This allows air to flow into the tank and will push out any existing residual water through the drainage valve. There shouldn't be any if the system was properly drained in the fall.
- Close the drainage valve.
- Turn on the cold water intake valve to begin filling the tank.
- Watch the open hot water tap. When it flows normally, the water tank is full.
- Close the hot water tap.
- Turn on the hot water tank electrical supply breaker on the main power box.
- Inspect the hot water pipes for leaks.

Any time you leave the cottage empty it is always a good idea to turn off the power to both the water pump and the hot water tank. If a pipe breaks, a connection lets go, or a welded spot fails for any reason, the pump will continue to run because it is endlessly trying to maintain pressure in the system. When the problem is inside the cabin, you will return to find a real mess.

Septic System and Outhouse

Consider having the septic tank pumped or the outhouse cleaned out before you start the new season. It may cost a few bucks but they money is well spent if it means avoiding a nasty mess in the middle of the cottage season.

The cottage opening experience can be a pleasant one when we take the time to close the cottage properly in the fall. Prevention and good planning are the key steps to opening the cabin quickly without major headaches.