

# InverNews

Fall/Winter 2018

*The Village  
With A  
Heritage*

## What you need to know about Rental Property Registration and Short-Term Rental Ban

This summer, Inverness implemented a Rental Registration Program to better achieve compliance regarding property maintenance standards in the Village.

The ordinance requires that all residential properties, that are not owner occupied, must be licensed by the Village, including single family homes and townhomes.

Residents who are not owners should make sure that their unit is registered and inform the property owners of this requirement.



Each rental property will be subject to an annual inspection, which will review the condition of the building's exterior, the exterior premises, and life-safety components (i.e. smoke and carbon monoxide detectors) within the residence.

In addition to Rental Property Registration, the Village Board approved an ordinance which bans short-term rentals, such as Airbnb, HomeAway, and VRBO. The short-term rental ban prohibits the rental of property for less than three months.

If you have any questions, about the rental property requirements, please contact Village Hall at 847-358-7740.

## Two New Officers Welcomed to the Village; Two of Inverness' Original Police Officers Retire

Mayor Jack Tatoes recently swore in **Police Officer Scott May** and **Detective Ed Valente** as the newest Police Officers to join the Inverness Police Department.

"Since the creation of the Inverness Police Department in 2009, I have had the honor to appoint police officers that have displayed a history of professionalism and commitment to community service at their prior positions," Mayor Tatoes said. "I look forward to Officer May and Detective Valente becoming an integral part of the Inverness Police Department, and providing the highest level of service to our citizens."

Officer May retired from the Arlington Heights Police Department, where he served for 27 years. He worked in the Patrol Division as well as the Investigations and Gang Unit. He was a member of the NIPAS Mobile Field Force and NIPAS Emergency Services Team. He has also served as a Field Training Officer, Firearms Instructor, Defensive Tactics Instructor, Less Lethal and Taser Instructor. In addition, he was a recipient of the Arlington Heights Police Department's "Officer of the Year" award. Officer May is currently on the board of the Illinois Tactical Officers Association.

Detective Ed Valente retired from the Streamwood Police Department after serving over 28 years where he obtained the rank of Chief of Police. Ed brings extensive investigation and patrol experience to Inverness. He served as a School Resource Officer and a Juvenile Officer. He was a member of the Major Case Assistance Team (MCAT) and Major Traffic Crash Reconstruction Team. Ed is a graduate of the Southern Police Institute and the FBI National Academy.



*Officer Scott May*



*Detective Ed Valente*

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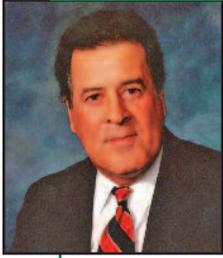
## Now through December 21 **'Tis the Season of Giving Warmth & Cheer**

- **Toys for Tots Drive:** Toys must be newly purchased and still in their packaging.
- **Winter Coat Drive:** New or gently used adult and children's coats are needed for the PATH (Palatine Assisting Through Hope) organization.

Toys and coats may be dropped off at the Inverness Village Hall and Inverness Police Department during normal business hours.



# Jack Tatoes



Dear Residents:

On the cover of this issue of the *InverNews*, we are pleased to welcome our newest Police Officers, Scott May and Ed Valente.

Earlier this year, the Village Board approved the FY19 Financial Plan, which covers the period of May 1, 2018, to April 30, 2019. Similar to past years, the Village's corporate property tax levy is based on total expenditures of the Police Department. In November, the Village will consider the 2018 Tax Levy, payable in 2019, of \$1,770,250, identical to last year's levy (i.e., no increase).

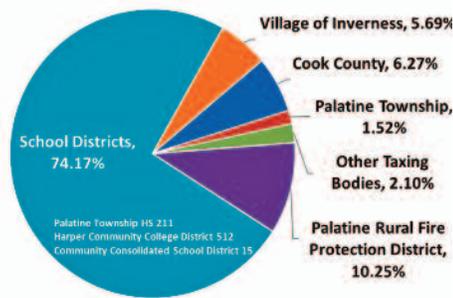
Since the establishment of the Inverness Police Department in 2009, our community has saved over \$6.0 million compared to the prior contract arrangement. Today's Inverness Police budget amount is nearly identical to Year One of a 5-year contract proposed by previously contracted services for its police services. Utilizing a conservative annual 5% increase for the proposed police contract, today's police contract services' expenditures would be in excess of \$2.8 million annually, reflecting savings in excess of \$1.1 million per year.

Since police services costs are funded 100% by the municipal property tax, these savings have resulted in flat or minimum increases of the Village's real estate tax levy for the past 7 years. This trend will continue into the upcoming years. As indicated earlier, there will be NO INCREASE in the general fund taxes that the Village levies on residents.

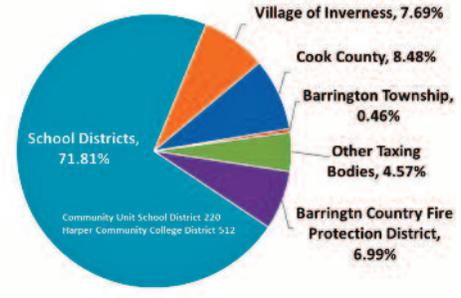
The first chart shows the portion of your total property tax bill that the Village receives for those residents who live in the Palatine Township side of Inverness. For the typical Palatine Township resident of Inverness, only 5.69% of your overall property tax bill goes to the Village of Inverness. As you can see from this chart, 74.17% of your property taxes go to fund the School Districts.

The second chart shows a similar breakdown for those residents who live in the Barrington Township side of Inverness. For those residents, 7.69% of your overall tax bill goes to the Village of Inverness and 71.81% of your property taxes go to the School Districts.

Sample 2017 Tax Rate Distribution  
Palatine Township



Sample 2017 Tax Rate Distribution  
Barrington Township



The Village is committed to operate with a conservative financial plan to be fiscally responsible to the community and taxpayers.

On behalf of myself and the Board of Trustees, we want to wish you and your family a safe and healthy Holiday Season.

Sincerely,

Jack Tatoes, Mayor

## Have a Residential Alarm System? Here's What You Need to Know

If you have a residential alarm system, you must have a permit on file with the Police Department. There is no cost for the permit. The information on your alarm system should be updated every two years. Permit applications are available online at [www.inverness-il.gov/forms.htm](http://www.inverness-il.gov/forms.htm).

Please note that you SHOULD NOT tell your alarm company to instruct the police not to respond, even if you believe it is a false alarm. Please allow the police to continue responding to your home. There is no charge for the first two police responses if an alarm permit is on file, regardless of whether it is a false alarm or an actual event requiring a police response.



# Grass Drainage Swale Maintenance Guide

## What is a grass drainage swale?

A grass drainage swale is an open channel that accepts stormwater runoff from yards and/or hard surfaces. A dense-grass swale prevents erosion and promotes water percolation into the ground, reducing the amount of runoff entering downstream streams and storm sewers. The grass covering the side slopes and swale bottom provides a filtration surface for the water, and helps to reduce the flow velocity. In steeper areas, some swales have stones across the width to help slow the flow rate, promote infiltration, and prevent erosion.

## Why is it important to maintain drainage swales?

An unmaintained swale may:

- Stop filtering the rainwater and allow trash and pollutants to enter our local streams and sewers.
- Be difficult or expensive to restore if left unmaintained.
- Allow water to pool on the surface long enough to allow insects to breed (longer than 3 days).
- Deposit eroded soil which can block the flow of water and cause local flooding.

## What should be included in regular preventative maintenance?

Performing preventative maintenance regularly will prevent long term damage and reduce costs. It is recommended to weed, remove trash and debris, and mow on a regular basis.

- Inspect your swale after storms to make sure that rainwater has drained and there is no erosion.
- Remove sediment and debris from in and around the swale.
- Remove weeds and plants that do not belong.
- Check for any obstruction or blockage of flow along inflow areas or pipes, including trash, debris, or sediment.
- Remove and compost leaves in the fall and spring. Leaves may smother the grass and block the flow of rainwater.

### Do NOT:

- Remove or alter your grass swale.

## Who is responsible for the maintenance?

As the property owner, you are responsible for all maintenance of your grass drainage swale.

# The Good and Bad of Drainage Swales

The photos below show what your drainage swale should — or should not — look like.



**Well Maintained Grass Swale:** Culverts are unobstructed; well established dense grass; free of debris and sediment



**Unmaintained Grass Swale:** Lack of grass in flow line; transports soil downstream which clogs culverts and storm sewer



**Alternate Rock Swale (when grass swale is not feasible due to wetness or excessive erosion):** Culverts are unobstructed; well established rock ditch line; no erosion and no soil transported downstream

Symptom	Possible Cause	Solution
Poor grass health	Your grass may be the wrong type for your shade and moisture conditions, or they may be smothered by weeds.	Remove dead or diseased grass and plant new vegetation as needed. Be sure to regularly remove weeds and other invasive plants.
Standing water for over 48 hours after a rain event.	Clogging due to leaf litter, grass clippings, sediment, or debris accumulation.	Remove any visible debris from the surface. Depending on the the swale, it may need to be tilled and replanted.
Erosion, bare soil, or nonexistent.	The rainwater is moving too fast and/or vegetation is lacking	Stabilize the eroded area by planting new vegetation. Consider using rocks to slow the flow of rainwater.

## Inverness Welcomes Two New Police Officers

(continued from page 1)

Officer May replaces Officer Scott Stoeckel, who was one of the original members in developing the Inverness Police Department in 2009. Stoeckel specialized with traffic and overweight truck enforcement, and served as the gun range instructor.

Detective Valente assumes the position previously held by Detective Bill Stutzman. Detective Stutzman joined the Inverness Police Department in 2009 and served as Inverness' first detective. Over the past eight-and-a-half years with the department, Bill provided excellent investigation skills and solved many crimes. The most noteworthy was a 1979 cold case murder. Bill was instrumental in obtaining the arrest and conviction of Jackie Gamari Greco, the wife of the victim.

### If You Enjoy Taking a Run in the Evening or Wintertime . . .

#### Be Safe and Be Seen: Make Yourself Visible to Drivers

- Wear bright/light colored clothing and reflective materials.
- Carry a flashlight when walking at night.
- Stand clear of bushes, hedges, parked cars, or other obstacles before crossing so drivers can see you.

### 'Fall Back' on November 4

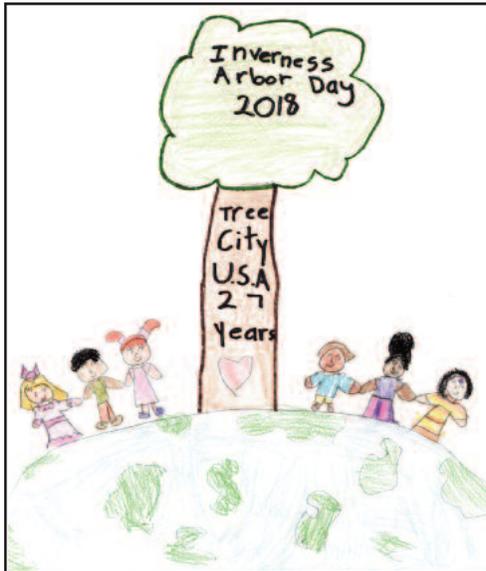
Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 4 at 2:00 am. Don't forget to turn your clocks back one hour.

Remember to check the batteries on your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

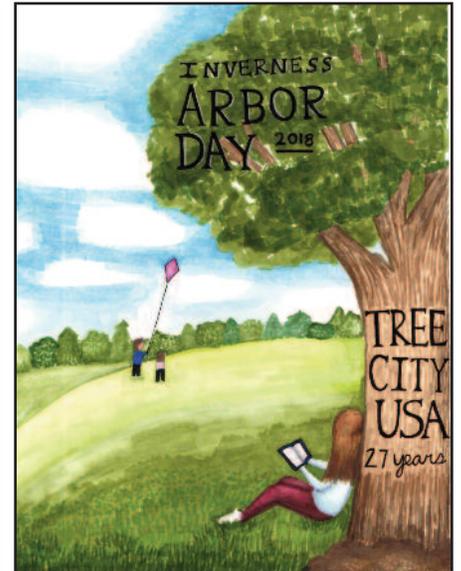


## Congratulations to These Winners!

We are pleased to share the artwork created by the two students who were selected as the 2018 Arbor Day Poster Contest winners. Alyssa Capra won in the under 12 age group, and Maggie Walsh won in the 12 and over age group. Congratulations to both of these artists!



Alyssa Capra, 12 and under age group winner



Maggie Walsh, 12 and over age group winner

## New Law for Texting While Driving Takes Effect Next Summer

On July 1, 2019, people caught texting while driving will be cited with a moving violation, on the first offense, instead of a non-moving violation. Motorists who rack up three moving violations within a year can have their driver's license suspended. In addition to the moving violation, the penalty for violating the law includes fines and court costs determined by a judge.



Currently, Illinois law prohibits the use of hand-held cell phones, texting, or using other electronic communications while operating a motor vehicle. Hands-free devices or Blue Tooth technology is allowed for persons age 19 and older.

### Changes in Refuse, Recycling & Yardwaste Pickup

Refuse and recycling will be collected one day later than usual due to the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays.

The last day for yard waste pickup is December 13. Curbside yardwaste pickups will resume on April 4, 2019.

#### Holidays Closings

Village offices will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

- November 12:** Veteran's Day
- November 22 & 23:** Thanksgiving
- December 24 & 25:** Christmas
- December 31 & January 1:** New Year's Day

*The Village of Inverness' elected officials and staff wish you a safe and joyous holiday season!*



# Cleaning Out The Basement or Garage? Here's How to Dispose of Unwanted Items

**White Goods Disposal:** Is it time to part with that old refrigerator in the garage or the washer or dryer in the basement?

**Groot** offers curbside pickup of appliances and white goods. Call Groot's customer service at 800-244-1977 for further information or to schedule a pickup.



**Com Ed** also provides free pickup

and recycling of working refrigerators -- plus receive a check for \$50.00. You may receive \$50.00 each for up to two working refrigerators. Refrigerators must be between 10 and 30 cubic feet, empty, defrosted, and in working order at the time of pickup. Com Ed will dismantle and recycle all of the parts in an environmentally responsible way to reduce the amount of landfill waste.

**Bulk items:** One bulk item per week is picked up free of charge. Bulk items must be 50 pounds or less. Any items over 50 pounds will be an additional cost.

**Electronic waste** may also be recycled through Groot. Free e-waste collection is available from Groot by calling customer service in advance at 800-244-1977 to arrange for pickup. Residents are asked to place items for pickup at the front, side, or top of the driveway. Electronic items included in this free service are computers and monitors, video game consoles, printers, scanners, televisions, digital converter boxes, electronic keyboards, cable receivers, fax machines, satellite receivers, video cassette recorders, digital video disc players, digital video disc recorders, and portable digital music players.



## General Recycling Guidelines

### YES!



**Plastic Bottles**



**Glass Bottles & Jars**



**Metal Cans**



**Paper, Cartons, & Cardboard**



**RE-CAP LIDS!**



**FLATTEN BOXES!**

Materials go in recycling cart loose - not in a plastic bag. Empty & Clean - No Food or Beverage Residue!

### NO!



**Do Not Bag Recyclables**



**No Plastic Bags or Plastic Wrap (return to retail)**



**No Food or Liquids (empty all containers)**



**No Clothing or Shoes (use donation programs)**



**No Tangles (no hoses, wires, chains, or electronics)**

- Plastic Bags or Film Wrap
- Plastic or Paper Cups/Plates
- Cup Lids/Straws
- Food/Plastic Utensils
- Chip/Candy Wrappers
- Juice/Food Pouches

- Napkins/Paper Towels/Tissue
- Diapers/Wipes
- Cords/Hoses/Hangers
- Batteries/Electronics
- Sharps (needles)
- Textiles/Shoes

# NEWS TO KNOW—

## BE A FRIEND TO A FIRE HYDRANT

Residents are asked to please shovel out fire hydrants when there is a snowfall with an accumulation. This will aid emergency services in reaching the hydrants more quickly, if they are needed. Just a few extra shovelfuls of snow can help protect your property, your neighbors, and your family.



## A FRIENDLY REMINDER ABOUT OVERNIGHT PARKING REGULATIONS

Village ordinance specifies that "... it shall be unlawful to park any vehicle on any street, alley, or public right of way within the Village between the hours of 1:00 AM and 6:00 AM." Overnight parking is prohibited because it helps police officers identify vehicles that may be involved in some type of criminal activity. It also helps keep your auto insurance rates lower because it reduces the opportunity for possible damage or theft to vehicles left out on the street.

Overnight parking permission can be requested by contacting the Police Department at (847) 358-7766.

## NOW THAT FALL IS HERE, CAN WINTER BE FAR BEHIND?

And with winter will come snow. So here is an important reminder about snow removal: snow from your property may not



be deposited on any Village street. Village ordinance prohibits plowing, blowing, or shoveling snow into the street. The homeowner is responsible for the actions of any contractor (snow removal company) they hire and will be held liable for such violations. The fine per incident is \$200.

## PUT THEM AWAY, PLEASE!

Remember that refuse and recycling totes must be stored out of sight. Please retrieve them from the curb in a timely fashion.

# Property Maintenance Reminders

The Village of Inverness reminds you that there are important codes and requirements related to the condition and maintenance of property within the Village. Please keep these property maintenance code provisions in mind throughout the year.

## Landscaping

- Maintain your lawn so that grass does not exceed eight inches in height
- Maintain shrubbery and trees so that they do not obstruct driver's vision, especially on corners or near curves in the road.

## Fences

- Fencing that encloses a swimming pool must have a sturdy, child-proof lock. Be sure the fencing is free of rust, and that grass surrounding the fencing is neat and trimmed.
- Fencing enclosures for dog runs, tennis courts, or decorative fencing that has been approved by the Village, should be painted or weathered if wood, free of rust if metal, unbroken, and in overall good condition. Keep grass, hedges or other plantings around such enclosures neat and trimmed.

## Vehicles

- No vehicle may be parked on the front lawn or in such a manner as to obstruct walking.
- All vehicles parked in the driveway in any location on the property must be operable.
- All vehicles must display current license plates and valid Village stickers.

## Structural Maintenance

- Display address numbers using a color that contrasts from their background. Numbers must be a minimum of 4 inches high.
- Keep all trim and wall exteriors free from peeling paint and rotting wood. Re-paint/re-stain and replace rotting wood when necessary.
- Maintain handrails and guard rails.
- Repair or replace broken windows.

## Storage/Debris/Vehicles

- Village ordinance prohibits the parking of restricted vehicles, such as travel trailers, camping trailers, recreational vehicles, boats and trailers, all-terrain vehicles, commercial vehicles, junk vehicles, and motorcycles, unless the restricted vehicle(s) is totally shielded from the view of other properties and the public street. Shielding may be provided by an attached garage or other accessory building. Pickup trucks and vans may be parked outside so long as they contain no signage or exterior storage of equipment or materials.
- Keep your yard free from litter and debris.
- Clean up animal waste regularly.

## Garbage Cans & Recycling Containers

- Place them at the curb no sooner than the evening prior to pickup
- Remove them from the street the same day or evening of pickup



A large percentage of home buyers decide whether to look inside a house or pass on it, based on curb appeal — the way the house looks on the outside from the street. You can help ensure that a potential buyer will want to come inside your house by giving time and attention to its exterior appearance.

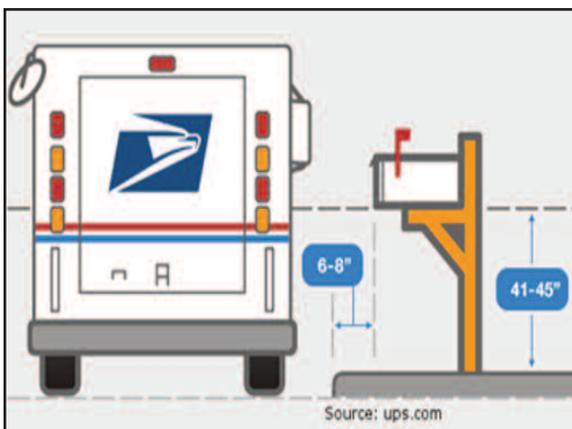
Owners and buyers do not look at a house the same way. It is difficult for owners to see their house's faults. If you are trying to sell, it is important to stop thinking of the property as your home. Learn to think of it as a house — a commodity you want to sell to the highest bidder.

## CURB APPEAL EXERCISE

- Your first impression of the house and yard.
- The best exterior feature of the house or lot.
- The worst exterior feature of the house or lot.
- Park where a potential buyer would walk toward the house, looking around as if it were your first visit. Is the approach clean and tidy? What could you do to make it more attractive?

Property maintenance sells a home. Keep your grass cut and bushes trimmed.

# Proper Mounting and Placement Will Protect Your Mailbox This Winter



Mailboxes are occasionally unintended casualties of the snow season. If a Village snowplow physically strikes a properly installed mailbox while removing snow, the Village's contractor will make repairs, or replace the mailbox with one of a standard design.

Mailboxes should be mounted so that the front of the box is a minimum distance of 6" to 8" from the edge of the pavement or back of the curb. According to US Postal regulations, the height of the mailbox should be between 41" and 45" from the road to the bottom of the box.

The Village will not replace or repair mailboxes where the damage was caused by heavy snow coming off the plow blade, so we suggest that you examine your mailbox early in the snow season to ensure that it is structurally sound and properly maintained.

**Damage must be reported within 24 hours for investigation.**

# 10 things you can do to AVOID FRAUD

Crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year. They often combine new technology with old tricks to get people to send money or give out personal information.

Your reports help the FTC, and other law enforcement agencies, investigate scams and bring crooks to justice.

Here are some practical tips to help you stay a step ahead.

- 1. Spot imposters.** Scammers often pretend to be someone you trust, like a government official, a family member, a charity, or a company you do business with. Don't send money or give out personal information in response to an unexpected request — whether it comes as a text, a phone call, or an email.
- 2. Do online searches.** Type a company or product name into your favorite search engine with words like "review," "complaint," or "scam." Or search for a phrase that describes your situation, like "IRS call." You can even search for phone numbers to see if other people have reported them as scams.
- 3. Don't believe your caller ID.** Technology makes it easy for scammers to fake caller ID information, so the name and number you see aren't always real. If someone calls asking for money or personal information, hang up. If you think the caller might be telling the truth, call back to a number you know is genuine.
- 4. Don't pay upfront for a promise.** Someone might ask you to pay in advance for things like debt relief, credit and loan offers, mortgage assistance, or a job. They might even say you've won a prize, but first you have to pay taxes or fees. If you do, they will probably take the money and disappear.
- 5. Consider how you pay.** Credit cards have significant fraud protection built in, but some payment methods don't. Wiring money through services like Western Union or MoneyGram is risky because it's nearly impossible to get your money back. That's also true for reloadable cards (like MoneyPak or Reloadit) and gift cards (like iTunes or Google Play). Government offices and honest companies won't require you to use these payment methods.
- 6. Talk to someone.** Before you give up your money or personal information, talk to someone you trust. Con artists want you to make decisions in a hurry. They might even threaten you. Slow down, check out the story, do an online search, consult an expert — or just tell a friend.
- 7. Hang up on robocalls.** If you answer the phone and hear a recorded sales pitch, hang up and report it to the FTC. These calls are illegal, and often the products are bogus. Don't press 1 to speak to a person or to be taken off the list. That could lead to more calls.
- 8. Be skeptical about free trial offers.** Some companies use free trials to sign you up for products and bill you every month until you cancel. Before you agree to a free trial, research the company and read the cancellation policy. Always review your monthly statements for charges you don't recognize.
- 9. Don't deposit a check and wire money back.** By law, banks must make funds from deposited checks available within days, but uncovering a fake check can take weeks. If a check you deposit turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for repaying the bank.
- 10. Sign up for free scam alerts from the FTC at [ftc.gov/scams](https://www.ftc.gov/scams).** Get the latest tips and advice about scams sent right to your inbox.

If you spot a scam, report it at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint). Your reports help the FTC and other law enforcement investigate scams and bring crooks to justice.



## Planning to be Away for Business or Pleasure? We'll Keep an Eye on Your House While You're Gone

The Inverness Police Department offers a free Vacation Watch program for residents who will be away from home. Officers will check your home on a daily basis while you are away for any signs of suspicious activity.

The Vacation Watch form can be downloaded from the Village website, [www.inverness-il.gov](https://www.inverness-il.gov) or you may stop by the Police Department or Village Hall to pick one up.



Prior to leaving on your trip, the Police Department suggests that you:

- Have your mail forwarded to you, held at the post office, or arrange to have it picked up daily.
- Cancel your newspaper delivery.
- Avoid announcing that you will be away from home on social media. This goes for the teens in your family, too!
- Leave a phone number where you can be reached with one or more neighbors so you can be notified in case of an emergency.
- Give your home that "lived in" look by using timers for your lights and radio. Vary the times they switch on and off. Never leave mail in a single central location, such as the kitchen table or countertop, where it can be seen from the outside and taken as an obvious sign that you are gone.



The Village of Inverness Police Department provides a Vacation Watch service. Check the Village website, [www.inverness-il.gov](https://www.inverness-il.gov) for details.

Village of Inverness  
1400 Baldwin Road • Inverness, Illinois 60067  
847/358-7740 • 847/358-8858 fax  
NEW Website: [www.inverness-il.gov](http://www.inverness-il.gov)

Village Hall Hours:  
Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM-4:30 PM

Jack Tatoes. . . . . Mayor  
Laurie C. White . . . . . Clerk

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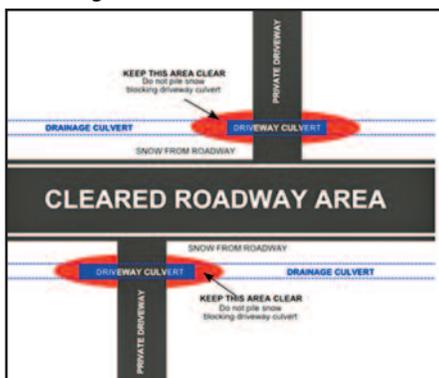
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## Maintaining Culverts in Wintertime Reduces Roadway Icing Hazards

Fall will soon be turning into winter, so now is the time for homeowners to take the necessary steps to reduce or eliminate these hazards for the upcoming winter season:

- Driveway culverts must be unobstructed. Culverts should be kept free of leaves and debris at all times. A small amount of salt at the culvert ends during each snow event can help keep the culvert from becoming blocked with ice. When the culvert is filled with ice, melting snow or early rains cannot flow through the culvert and often flow onto the pavement. This situation creates icy roads when temperatures fall below freezing.
- Sump pump discharge lines are required to discharge within your property and be set back a minimum of 20 feet from the right-of-way line. Icing conditions on road pavement are more likely when sump pumps discharge directly into right-of-way ditches.
- Snow cleared from your driveway must be kept on your property. Snow cannot be plowed across the street into the opposite right-of-way. Plowing snow across the street creates three significant problems: first, it creates windrows

(snow trails) off each side of the plow, which become icy patches for drivers on the road; second, when not plowed far enough, it reduces the road driving width; and last, but not least, when pushed fully off the road pavement, it blocks the drainage ditch, so when snow melts and rains occur, the ditch has a frozen ice dam, which prevents proper drainage.



- Individual homeowners are responsible for the maintenance of the right-of-way, including road shoulder grass and ditch drainage. Fall rains and winter conditions can make the road shoulders particularly subject to tire ruts and related damage. Homeowners need to maintain and repair the right-of-way on their property for both safety and aesthetics.
  - If you believe that a Village snowplow has caused damage along the roadway frontage of your property (grass tire ruts, etc.), be sure to **call the Village Hall within 24 hours** so that the Village can document the damage. The Village will hire a landscape contractor in the spring to fix such documented damage locations only.
- The quality of our community relies on each of us for the continued beauty of our neighborhoods.

## Be Safe This Holiday Season

**Cooking** is the top cause of holiday fires. The most common culprit is food that is left unattended. It's easy to get distracted; take a pot holder with you when you leave the kitchen as a reminder that you have something on the stove. Make sure to keep a kitchen fire extinguisher handy, and check that smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are working.

**Unattended candles** cause more fires in December than during any other month. Maintain about a foot of space between a candle and anything that can burn. Set candles on sturdy bases, or cover with hurricane globes. Before bed, walk through each room to make sure candles are blown out. For atmosphere without worry, consider flameless LED candles.



**Christmas trees** should be kept away from heat sources, such as a fireplace or heater. Buy a fresh tree with intact needles, and water it every day. No matter how well a tree is watered, it will start to dry out after about four weeks, so be sure to take your tree down soon after the holidays have ended.

**Decorative Lights:** Inspect light strings and throw out any with frayed or cracked wires or broken sockets. When decorating, do not run more than three strings of lights end to end. Extension cords should be in good condition and UL-rated for indoor or outdoor use. Check outdoor receptacles to make sure the ground fault interrupters don't trip. If they trip repeatedly, that is a sign they need to be replaced. When hanging lights outside, avoid using nails or staples which can damage the wiring and increase the risk of a fire.