

Freeze Protection Tips

TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT WATER PIPES FROM FREEZING WHEN THE TEMPERATURE DROPS BELOW FREEZING

If Your Pipes Freeze or Burst

Don't take chances. If you turn on your faucets and nothing comes out, call a plumber.

If you detect that your water pipes have frozen and burst, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve in the house. (Make sure everyone in your family knows where the water shut-off valve is and how to open and close it.)

Your shut off valve is usually located directly opposite the water meter where the service line enters your house. Normally the shut off valve is near the perimeter of your house, often close to a water faucet or spigot.

Never try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame. Water damage is preferable to burning down your house. You may be able to thaw a frozen pipe with the warm air from a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe. Never use electrical appliances in areas of standing water because you could be electrocuted.

Before the Cold Hits

Exposed pipes can freeze and burst when the air temperature reaches below-freezing (32 degrees F.) The water pipe between the water meter and your home or property is often the most vulnerable to freezing conditions and therefore should be wrapped with foam insulation. You also may need to insulate your water pipes in the attic and basement, depending on how well those areas of your home are insulated. Foam insulation is available at most hardware stores and can be easily secured using electrical tape or copper wire. Insulate pipes in your home's crawl spaces and attic. These exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing. Remember: The more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be.

Heat tape or thermostatically-controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure to use products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturers' installation and operation instructions.

Seal leaks that allow cold air inside, near where pipes are located. Look for air leaks around electrical wiring, dryer vents and pipes. Use caulk or insulation to keep the cold out and the heat in. With severe cold, a tiny opening can let in enough cold air to cause a pipe to freeze.

Disconnect garden hoses and, if practical, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house. Irrigation: To prevent your irrigation pipes from freezing, drain the water from any exposed irrigation water pipes and, as an extra precaution, cover those exposed sections with foam insulation.

When the Mercury Drops

A trickle of hot and cold water might be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.

Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

If You're Away

Set the thermostat in your house no lower than 55 degrees (12 degrees Celsius).

Ask a friend or neighbor to check your house daily to make sure it's warm enough to prevent freezing, or...

Shut off and drain the water system. Be aware that if you have a fire protection sprinkler system in your house, it will be deactivated when you shut off the water.