

Prep Your Water System for Winter

On October 28, 2023, our local overnight temperatures dropped to the low 30's and even down to 28 degrees Fahrenheit in the early morning hours. It is that time of year that we should all be thinking about preparing our water systems for the winter. In order to be prepared for those cold temperatures, we have compiled a number of ideas to help protect your homes plumbing before and during freezing weather, in addition to some ideas on how to thaw your pipes if they do freeze.



Before Freezing Weather

Outside your home:

- Caulk around pipes where they enter the house and close all foundation vents. This will stop cold winter air from blowing into your house. Open foundation vents are probably the greatest cause of frozen or split water pipes. You will not only protect your pipes, but you may also reduce your winter heating needs.
- Be sure to remember to open the foundation vents again in the spring to prevent dry rot.
- Protect outside pipes and faucets. For most newer homes the outside hose bibs are frost free, meaning that the shut off valve is actually located deep inside the insulated wall. If you are not sure if the hose bib is frost free, when you turn it off and water continues to drain for a few seconds, this is a good indication that the hose bib is frost-free. If you are not sure or if you do not have a frost-free hose bib, then you will need to wrap the hose bib with newspapers or rags covered with plastic, fiberglass, or molded foam-insulating covers to wrap the faucet. Molded foam insulating covers are available at most plumbing and hardware stores. In some homes, the outside faucet may have a

separate shut-off in the basement or crawl space. If you do have a separate valve for outside faucets, shut it off. Then go outside and turn on the faucets to drain water from the line.

- Disconnect garden hoses from the faucets.

- Shut-off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems including the backflow prevention device. Some irrigation systems require blowing the system out with a large air compressor. We highly recommend that you contact a landscape professional with the proper equipment and training. Hiring a landscape professional for this service is inexpensive and can avoid potential damage to both your irrigation system and the public water system.



- Know where your main water shut-off valve is outside of your home. Typically, they are located 18-inches from the foundation wall where the water line enters the building. It is very important to know where this valve is located because if a pipe bursts anywhere in the house – kitchen, bath, basement, or crawl space – *this valve turn will turn it off*. Be sure everyone in the family knows where it is and what it does.
- If there is a leak and you cannot find the shut-off valve, call utility billing at 997-3436 or public works at 997-4106 during regular business hours. After hours call the police department non-emergency number at 997-3515 and they will contact a public works employee.

Inside your home:

- Wrap all pipes in unheated areas. Wrapping will protect pipes from freezing. Check your house for pipes in unheated areas such as the crawl space, attic, garage or basement.
- Use insulating tape or molded pipe sleeves and wrap it over the entire length of exposed pipe. Cover all valves, pipe-fittings, etc. with insulating tape or fiberglass insulation.
- Shut off and drain your water system if you are leaving home for an extended period. Be sure to turn off the water heater before draining the system. Turn off the main water shut-off valve, then go through the house and turn on all faucets, sinks, tubs, showers, etc., and flush the toilets. Set your thermostat to 55 degrees. Ask yourself “what might happen if your source of heat goes off due to a storm when you’re not home”.

During Freezing Weather

- Open cupboard doors in the kitchen and bathrooms. Water lines supplying the kitchen or bathrooms are frequently located next to outside walls. Any air leaks in the siding or insulation can cause these pipes to freeze. Leaving the cupboard doors open when the temperature is below freezing allows pipes behind the cupboards to get more heat.

If Your Pipes Freeze



- Thaw the lines safely. If you know where the lines are frozen, you can attempt to thaw them with a hair dryer set on low heat. Wave the dryer back and forth along the frozen area. Thawing won't be fast, but it will be safe. **DO NOT LEAVE THE PIPES UNATTENDED.**
 - **DON'T USE an OPEN FLAME TO THAW FROZEN WATER LINES.** It may be fast, but could catch the house on fire.
 - **DON'T USE AN ELECTRIC ARC WELDER TO THAW FROZEN WATER LINES.** This also causes fire!
- When home plumbing is frozen, there is often water available at one faucet. Please check to see if water is available at one of the faucets. If there is no water at all, the problem may be in the street. For assistance, please call utility billing at 997-3436 or public works at 997-4106 during regular business hours. After hours call the police department non-emergency line at 997-3515 and they will contact a public works employee.

If Your Pipes Are Broken

- SHUT OFF THE WATER AND WATER HEATER.
- If you are unable to find the shut-off valve, or have water leaking in the house from a broken pipe, we can help you shut off the water. Please call utility billing at 997-3436 or public works at 997-4106 during regular business hours. After hours call the police department non-emergency number at 997-3515 and they will contact a public works employee.
- To repair the broken pipe, you may want to call a plumber.



Remember, the best tip of all is to protect your home before the winter weather hits. By winterizing your home now, you can prevent your home from the damage and inconvenience of frozen water pipes.