

Cold Weather Information

With the cold weather upon us, don't let freezing temperatures catch you by surprise. There are a number of problems that can be caused by frozen water pipes, and it can be very costly to repair them. Remember, unlike most things, water expands when it freezes which can result in damage to water pipes, valves, meters, etc.

With a little forethought and insulation, you can protect yourself from the headaches and costs associated with frozen pipes.

If your pipes freeze there is the possibility that they might break which can lead to flooding.

If you have no water, your heating system may become damaged or it may not work at all.

Water meters and water pipes, especially those in the outside walls of your house, or in unheated basements, crawl spaces or garages, can freeze and break if they are not protected.

The possibility of freezing increases during long periods of zero or near zero temperatures.

Measures to take before the cold weather hits

- Eliminate drafts – close off crawl space vents and doors. Repair broken or cracked basement windows. Make sure basement windows and doors close tightly, and seal any cracks in the wall. Even a small crack, combined with low temperatures and high winds, can freeze nearby pipes, even if the surrounding area is warm.
- Insulate pipe in unheated areas of your home with weatherproof insulation which is available at hardware or plumbing supply stores.
- If you have experienced frozen pipes in your house before, you can leave a small stream of water (about the size of the lead in a pencil) running from the highest faucet in your house. This will keep the water flowing in the pipes and there will be less of a chance that it will freeze. Be sure the drain is opened and not clogged, or partially clogged where the faucet is running – you don't want to overflow a sink or tub and cause a flooding problem. The amount of water will not cost a lot of money – water costs about \$2 for a thousand gallons. A small stream of water will flow about 2,000 to 2,500 gallons in a month. The water should only be flowed when the weather is freezing, not all winter long.
- If you are leaving your house for a long period of time during the winter, make sure that you keep the heat on, even a low setting. Another option you may consider is to have your pipes drained and the water shut-off – if you do shut-off the water make sure you turn-off the heat also, since the heating system can become damaged if there is no water in it.
- Disconnect and drain outdoors hoses, faucets and underground lawn sprinkler systems. The sprinklers are not buried deep enough in the ground to keep them from freezing. In our area pipes must be buried at least 4 feet below the ground to be safe from freezing. That is the minimum depth at which water mains and water services are usually installed.
- Protect your meter from freezing. Meters on an outside wall, in an un-insulated cabinet or in an enclosed area can freeze if heat is blocked from circulating through the area. Open cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate. In unheated areas protect the meter with insulation. At the Water Authority the customer is responsible for protecting the meter – if it freezes and breaks, you will be charged for the replacement.

What To Do If Your Pipes Freeze

Make sure you know where the master water valve is in your house. We have pamphlets showing you where the valve is normally located in your house and we can also provide a hanger for you to put by the valve so it can be found quickly in an emergency.

All family members should know where the master valve is located and how to operate it. This valve should be in good working order, if it is not have it replaced by a plumber.

If a pipe breaks or leaks in your house whether from freezing or from other causes, it is good to have the master water valve in working order, otherwise you could have a major flood.

- If you can get to the frozen pipe, chances are you will be able to thaw it out.
- Never use boiling water, a heat gun or a flame to thaw pipes.Â This can cause the pipes to burst.
- Soak a heavy cloth or towel in hot water and wrap it around the pipe where it is frozen.Â Then slowly pour hot water over the cloth â€ Do Not use boiling water.
- Use a portable hair dryer and slowly apply heat to the pipe.Â Put it on the low heat setting & slowly wave back & forth along the area of the freeze.
- If it is under a sink with a cabinet, put one or two large pots of boiling water inside the cabinet and the steam will help to thaw our the pipe.
- Install heat wrap around the pipes and let it thaw out.Â The heat wrap can also be installed in cold areas before it gets cold to help prevent the pipes from freezing.
- Sometimes the water service freezes in the ground somewhere between the water main and the entrance of the water line into your house.Â Water lines usually freeze because all or some portion of the line is buried less than 4 feet below ground.
- The Water Authority has thawing machines that can be used to help thaw out services that are under the ground.Â The Water Authority will only thaw out its portion of the water service if it is frozen.Â Any portion of the water service from the property line to the inside of the house is the responsibility of the customer to thaw and get a plumber if necessary.