

Instructions for Preparing Your Pipes for Winter:

Preventing a pipe from freezing doesn't take a lot of time, effort, or money. Before the frigid arctic air sets in, take some time to protect the pipes in your home.

- Drain outside water hoses and disconnect them from faucets. Store the hoses in a warm location like a shed or garage.
- Remove water from sprinkler lines and swimming pools as directed by the manufacturer.
- Wrap insulating material around outdoor faucets. You can also protect faucets with special insulated covers.
- Check for unprotected water lines in unheated areas like crawl spaces, attics, garages, and basements. Use pipe sleeves or insulating material to protect the pipes. Don't forget to protect hot water pipes which can also freeze if the water is not flowing.
- Protect metallic pipes in direct contact with concrete walls or floors.
- Add insulation to exterior walls and keep temperatures set to at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit, even if you are not going to be home.
- Close garage doors if water pipes are located there and open cabinet doors in bathrooms and kitchens so warm air can circulate around the water lines in the event of a freeze.
- Turn on a slow flow of water at the faucet inside the home if a deep-freeze is expected. Choose a faucet furthest from the water meter.

If Your Pipes Freeze:

When pipes are frozen you turn the faucet on and no water comes out or comes out in a trickle. As soon as you realize a pipe is frozen you need to take immediate action.

- Slightly open the faucet supplied by the frozen pipe even if you do not yet know where it is frozen.
- Identify the frozen water supply pipe and find the location of the blockage.
- Follow the pipe back from the faucet to where it runs through cold areas such as an exterior wall, unheated crawl space or in some cases an unheated basement if the pipe is near an outside wall.
- Often the frozen area of the pipe will be frosted or have ice on it. If the situation is getting critical the pipe may be slightly bulged or look slightly fissured.

Exposed Frozen Pipe:

If the frozen pipe is exposed, then you have several options available but first here are some notes to remember. When working on thawing the pipe leave the main water valve open and remember to **heat the pipe from the faucet toward the frozen area**. This way, the water can flow out as the ice melts and the water pressure in the pipe will force the ice out once it melts sufficiently.

Hair Dryer: One of the best and safest ways to thaw the pipe is to heat the area with a high power hair dryer. Again, make sure to open the faucet and then heat the pipe working back from the faucet toward the frozen blockage. Also, if the pipe is close to the wall, place a cookie sheet behind the pipe to help radiate heat onto the back side of the pipe.

Heat Lamp: A heat lamp works well to heat an exposed pipe. You can use an infrared or incandescent heat lamp. As before, if the pipe is close to the wall, use a cookie sheet behind the pipe to help reflect heat onto the pipe.

Small Portable Heater: If you have one of those small powerful heaters they work great when warming pipes under a kitchen or vanity base cabinet. Direct the heater onto the frozen section of pipe. It will work like a hair dryer on steroids!

NOTE: While working on thawing the pipe, if it bursts before it is thawed, then shut off the water at the water main immediately and contact a plumbing professional!