

Fall Water Tips to Keep Pipes from Freezing as Freezing Weather Hits

Safety First!

Carefully check your irrigation systems and turn off or adjust all irrigation run times and spray patterns to avoid creating overspray where dangerous ice could form in the morning or evening until your system is turned off and winterized. Once freezing weather hits, most plants become dormant and their water requirement is low. Do your part to reduce the potential for accidents and liability caused by ice from your irrigation systems

Outside your home and business:

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 new homes the outside hose bibs are frost free, meaning that the shut off 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 insulate the hose bib. 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 separate valves for outside faucets, shut them off. Then go outside and turn on the faucets to drain water from the line.

Disconnect garden hoses from the faucets, this prevents faucets from trapping water and freezing them. It is a good idea to not only drain the garden hoses, but also store them inside in a protected area. This will make them last longer.

Shut-off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems including the backflow prevention device and water meters on the irrigation systems. Some systems require blowing the system out with a large air compressor. **DO NOT BLOW AIR THROUGH A WATER METER.** We highly recommend that you contact a landscape professional with proper equipment and training. Hiring a landscape professional for this service can avoid potential damage to both your irrigation system and the public water system.

Know where your main water shut-off valve is inside of your home. Typically they are located where the water line enters the building. It is very important to know where the valve is located because if a pipe bursts anywhere in the house basement, or crawl space-this valve should turn it off. Be sure everyone in the family knows where it is and what it does. This will allow you and others to find the valve quickly in an emergency. It is the property owners or tenants responsibly to protect the water pipes and appurtenances including the water meter, from freezing.

Inside your homes:

Insulate all pipes in unheated areas. Insulation will help protect pipes from freezing. Check your house for pipes in unheated areas such as the crawl space, attic, garage or basement.

Use insulated tape or molded pipe sleeves and wrap it over the entire length of exposed pipe. Cover all valves pipe-fitting etc. with insulated tape or fiberglass insulation.

Shut off and drain your water system if you are leaving home for an extended period. On the water heater it is necessary to turn the heating components off before draining the water heater.

Turn off the main water shut-off valve, then go though 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 are not home.

During Freezing Weather:

When leaving the house for an extended time, or if you live in an older home, consider opening cabinet 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 house pipes to freeze. Leaving these cabinet doors open when the temperature is below freezing allows pipes behind the cabinets to get more heat.

If Your Pipes Freeze:

Thaw the lines safely. If you know where the lines 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. If there is no water at all, the problem may be outside the building.

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, you may want to call a plumber.

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