



Feature Column

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Keeping Your Hometown Healthy

How to Avoid Frozen Water Pipes

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Don't let winter sneak up on you! Remember, frozen pipes are not only inconvenient, they can be expensive. A lack of water for food preparation, drinking and sanitary purposes can be more than a nuisance. It can be downright unhealthy. Here are a few tips to keep your water flowing freely all winter.

Check your outside faucets:

- Disconnect all hoses from outside faucets.
- Shut off and drain all outside faucets and lawn sprinkler systems **OR** if you don't have a separate shut-off valve for outside faucets, protect them with insulated covers. You can find covers at hardware and building supply stores.

Eliminate drafts:

- Close all windows and doors near water lines.
- Caulk around pipes where they enter the house.
- Close foundation vents not needed for residential use.
- Seal cracks in basement, crawl space and other outside walls.

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Insulate pipes / Improve internal heat:

- Wrap pipes in unheated areas with weatherproof insulation or heat tape products.
- If you have a kitchen sink or bathroom fixtures located so that the outside wall faces north, let a faucet **drip** during cold weather conditions. **Do not waste water by allowing a steady stream to run. A drop every couple of seconds should be sufficient.** The small cost of the dripping water during very cold weather will be minimal when compared to the cost of repairing a frozen or split pipe. Also, leave cupboard doors open so pipes within those cupboards are exposed to interior heat.
- If you are going to be gone for any length of time, shut off all your water at the water main shut-off valve, or you may want to shut the service off at the meter. Turn on all the faucets and flush the toilets to drain pipes and allow for expansion. Turn your water heater thermostat down to its lowest setting.

What to do if your pipes freeze:

- Locate your main shut-off valve. If a water line has broken or split, you don't want to waste time looking for the shut-off when the water begins flowing again.
- Test the shut-off to make sure it's working.
- Find where the pipe is frozen. Look in unheated areas where pipe insulation is loose or missing. Open a faucet downstream of the frozen area to provide an outlet for the water after thawing. Thaw the pipe using a hair dryer on the low-heat setting. Move the dryer back and forth across the frozen section. Be patient. This can be a slow process.
- **NEVER USE AN OPEN FLAME TO THAW A FROZEN LINE!**

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- If none of your faucets work and you can't find where the lines are frozen, it's possible a service line is frozen. Call your water system's Customer Service to see if they can provide assistance in thawing the service line.

If the service line is frozen within your property, thawing the line will probably be your responsibility.

Take a few minutes to prepare your home for winter and avoid these problems.

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