

How Can I Prepare for a Frozen Pipe Disaster?

Prevent Your Pipes From Freezing

- Disconnect all gardening hoses and install covers on all outside faucets.
- Keep your house temperature at 68 degrees or higher, even if you're leaving the house for an extended period of time.
- Open cabinet doors below sinks to allow heat from the home to circulate.
- **Identify the location of the main water valve and the valve on your water heater. (Learning the location of these valves may come in handy during an emergency.)**
- Wrap pipes nearest exterior walls and in crawl spaces with pipe insulation or with heating tape. This can prevent freezing, especially for interior pipes that run along outside walls.
- Close all windows near water pipes; cover or close open-air vents. Freezing temperatures combined with wind drafts can cause pipes to freeze more frequently.
- Heat your basement and consider weather sealing your windows.
- Insulate outside walls and unheated areas of your home.
- If you plan to be away from home for an extended period of time, shut off water supply valves to your washing machine.

Monitor Freezing Pipe Conditions

- Allow a faucet to drip slightly (lukewarm water) in order to minimize freezing.
- The first sign of freezing is reduced water flow from a faucet.
- Check your faucets for water flow and pressure before you go to sleep and again when you wake up.
- Check pipes around your water meter, in unheated areas, near exterior walls and in crawl spaces. These tend to be vulnerable to freezing conditions.
- Identify cold air drafts coming in from a flue or chimney chase and caulk gaps that are near pipes.

If a Pipe Freezes

- If a faucet or pipe inside your house freezes, you can thaw it using a good hair dryer. (For safety purposes, avoid operating a hair dryer around standing water.)
- To thaw a frozen pipe, heat water on the stove, soak towels in the hot water and wrap them around cold sections of the pipes.
- When thawing a pipe, start thawing it nearest to the faucet. Make sure the faucet is turned on so that melted water can drip out.

If a Pipe Bursts

- Shut off water at the main valve.
- If the break is in a hot water pipe, the valve on top of the water heater should be closed.
- **Call a plumber.** Keep an emergency number nearby for quick access.
- **Call a qualified, certified professional to clean up the mess and prevent additional losses due to mold and rot.**