



Cold Weather Tips



Winter has arrived and with freezing temperatures comes the risk of frozen pipes. Here are some suggestions for protecting your home during extremely cold temperatures:

- **Insulate exposed pipes or faucets**

Wrapping exposed pipes or pipes that run through outside walls, attics, unheated garages or crawl spaces can help prevent freezing. Wrap insulating material over the entire length of exposed pipe. Insulated foam pipe sleeves can also be used. Cover all valves, joints, etc. with insulating tape or fiberglass insulation. Make sure your outdoor sprinklers are shut off and wrap your outdoor spigots or install an insulated cover to help keep the outside faucet from freezing. You can find the supplies you need at a local hardware store.

- **Eliminate drafts**

Close off crawl space vents and foundation openings. Repair broken or cracked windows. Make sure doors and windows close tightly. Many of the weather-proofing techniques that help to reduce your heating bill will also help to reduce the possibility that your pipes will freeze in cold weather. For example, caulk or insulate around door frames, windows and around pipes where they enter the house to reduce incoming cold.

- **Locate the main water shut-off valve**

Most homes have a master valve or a main water shut-off that will allow you to turn off all the water coming into the house. The valve is usually located in the valve box (normally next to your house) where the main water line enters the house. If a pipe breaks somewhere in the house, you can turn off the water at this main valve. Show other family members where the main water shut-off is located.

Note: *The valve located in the water meter box near the property line is not your main shut-off. The valve located in the meter box is the property of the City and should only be used by City personnel or a licensed plumber. It is against City ordinance for any unauthorized person to tamper with this valve. Should you have an emergency and are unable to shut off the water contact Water Utilities Dispatch at 972-216-6973 to have the City valve shut off.*

- **Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses**

This will allow the pipe that feeds the outdoor spigot to drain and can help to prevent a hard freeze from bursting the outdoor faucet or the pipe leading to it. Drain and coil the hose, then store it away for warmer weather to prevent damaging the hose.

- **Drain in-ground sprinkling systems**

Check the manufacturer's instructions or call your installer for information on the best way to do this.

- **Open doors below sinks**

Opening the cabinet doors, especially if the sink is located against an exterior wall, will allow warm air to reach the pipes.

- **Let the water run temporarily**

Leave a small trickle of water running, especially if you have pipes located in an exterior wall or under a slab, from each faucet – don't forget the bathtub and shower. This will keep water moving

through the pipes and will keep the pipes from freezing. A trickle of water about the size of a pencil lead is sufficient.

If a pipe freezes despite your precautions:

- **Thaw the pipe**

If you know where the freeze-up is located and the pipe is exposed, you may be able to thaw the pipe with a hair dryer set on a low setting. Wave the stream of warm air back and forth along the pipe until water will flow through the pipe. Never use a torch or open flame to thaw a pipe.

If the frozen pipe is not exposed, shut off the main water valve and set up a portable heater where the pipes enter the house. It may take some time, but eventually all the pipes in the house will warm up. If you are using this method, do not leave the space heater unattended.

- **If a pipe leaks or breaks**

Once a pipe has frozen, there is a very good chance that it will break or leak. The first thing to do is shut off the water at the master shut-off valve as quickly as possible to prevent flooding and water damage. Unless you are an experienced do-it-yourselfer, you may need to call a plumber to repair the break or leak. Should your pipes break, shut off the water and then turn off the heating source to your water heater. Again, you may need to contact a licensed plumber.

Taking these precautions will help protect your water pipes throughout the winter season. For additional questions or help, please call the Water Utilities Division at 972-216-6949.