

HOW TO WINTERIZE YOUR HOME'S PLUMBING

Outside

Protect outside pipes and faucets. Disconnect and store garden hoses. If your home has a separate shut-off for external faucets, turn it off and drain the water from those faucets. Consider upgrading to frost-free hose bibs and investing in hose bib covers for more protection.

Close all foundation vents. Foundation vents that are left open are the most significant cause of frozen or split water lines. When cold air seeps through overlooked openings, exposed water pipes may freeze. But remember, do NOT plug air vents by your furnace or water heater. Open the vents again in the spring to prevent dry rot.

Drain irrigation systems. You may want to call a professional company to blow out any leftover water in the underground lines. A broken sprinkler pipe can damage the delicate components that make up the entire system, increasing the cost of repair.

Keep the garage door closed in an attached garage. Keep out the cold. Keep the garage door closed to prevent cold air from affecting plumbing on bordering walls. Consider insulating spaces such as your garage, attic, basement, and crawl space.



Inside



Find your main shut-off valve and label it. Know where to access and how to use your main water shut-off valve. You can usually find it in your basement or crawl space near your water meter. Turning off your water quickly will limit damage and control costs in case a frozen pipe ruptures.

Insulate pipes in unheated areas such as the crawl space, attic, garage, or basement. Use insulating tape or molded pipe sleeve and wrap it over the entire length of the exposed pipe. Cover all valves, pipe-fittings, etc., with insulating tape or fiberglass.

Open cupboard doors in the kitchen and bathrooms. Water lines supplying the kitchen or bathrooms are frequently located on outside walls. Any air leaks in siding or insulation can cause these pipes to freeze. Leaving the cupboard doors open when the temperature is below freezing allows pipes to get more heat behind the cupboards.

Leave a pencil-lead-thin stream of water flowing. During the worst of a cold spell, allow a small flow of water to run from the faucet that is furthest from your meter. Water continuously flowing throughout the pipes in your home can help prevent them from freezing. Using cold water will save on your gas or electric bill. And remember to catch that running water in a bucket and put it to some other household use (watering indoor plants, flushing the toilet, etc.)

Turn off the water if you are away for an extended period. If you'll be away from home for several days, turn the water off at the main valve and drain the outside faucets. Or, leave your thermostat set at 55 degrees or higher to ensure your home stays warm enough to keep interior plumbing from freezing.

If Your Pipes Do Freeze, turn your water off at the private water shut-off valve. Never try to thaw frozen pipes with an open flame, doing this is dangerous and could damage your pipes. Be prepared for possible leaks as the pipes thaw.

As a reminder, the Department of Utilities is not responsible for protecting or thawing out the service line after it leaves the water meter and goes towards your home.

If you suspect a frozen water main or see a water leak in the street, call the Department of Utilities 24/7 at 434.970.3800.