

Winter Tips: How to avoid frozen pipes in the winter

During winter colder temperatures, homeowners should be on guard for possible frozen pipes. By taking certain precautions now, you might be able to avoid a hefty plumbing bill this winter.

- Know your home by locating your water meter, main shut-off valve, and individual fixture valves inside your home.
- Remove, drain, and store outdoor garden hoses. Close the valves inside your home that control outdoor water spigots. Open the water spigot and allow it to drain. Insulated outdoor spigot covers can be purchased from your local home improvement store and can provide additional cold weather protection.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.
- Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature during the day and at night during single to below zero temperatures. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.
- Turn at least one faucet on and let a small, pencil-size stream run (especially at night). Ideally, the faucet should be on an exterior wall. If you have a larger, two-story home, let a small stream run from a second faucet upstairs. Once again you might incur a marginally higher water and sewage bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst. Running water through the pipe - even at a trickle - helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- If you are traveling and turn your home's thermostat down to save energy while away, do not set it lower than 55 degrees. Have a neighbor check your home regularly, especially on extremely cold days.
- If you are leaving your home for the winter, or an extended period of time, consider closing your main shut-off valve and draining your pipes.

If your pipes freeze:

Use your master water shut-off valve to cut the water flow to the home immediately. This is usually near your water meter.

Not all plumbing systems are the same.

- Attempting to thaw a frozen pipe without a professional plumber's help or advice can lead to serious damages that are very expensive to repair.
- If you proceed carefully and you are **not** in an area of standing water, you may be able to thaw a pipe with a hair dryer. However, do not attempt this without talking to a plumber first.
- ***NEVER attempt to thaw a pipe with a torch or any other kind of open flame! This is extremely dangerous and can be deadly.***
- After a frozen pipe is thawed, turn the water back on very slowly while watching carefully for any leaks. Be prepared to shut your water off at the master valve in case of a leak.