

Cold Weather Preparation

When a water pipe freezes and breaks, you may have to wait until a plumber can get to you, and it may be a costly repair. If no one is home when the pipe thaws, the flooding and property damage in your home could lead to repair costs and inconvenience. To avoid such problems, The District wishes to remind water customers to prepare for winter weather and freezing temperatures. If you haven't already, follow these tips to ensure that you're well-prepared:

General cold weather steps:

- Locate your master water supply valve and tag it so that you can find it quickly in case of emergency. Show family members where it is located so that everyone will be able to find it when they need to. We strongly recommend that each customer connection have its own shut off immediately adjacent to its water meter. Leaks can occur in the underground service line as well as within the house!
- Check around the home for areas where water supply lines are located in unheated areas. Look in the basement, crawl space, attic, garage, and under kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Both hot and cold water pipes in these areas should be insulated. A hot water supply line can freeze just as a cold water supply can freeze if water is not running through the pipe and the water temperature becomes cold.
- Consider installing specific products made to insulate water pipes like a “pipe sleeve” or installing UL-listed “heat tape,” “heat cable,” or similar materials on exposed water pipes. Many products are available at your local building supplier. Pipes should be carefully wrapped, with ends butted tightly and joints wrapped with tape. Follow manufacturers’ recommendations for installing and using these products. Insulate pipes or faucets in unheated areas in the home and inside outbuildings also, not just outside. Hardware stores will have materials available.
- Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses, allowing water to drain from the pipe. Otherwise, one good overnight freeze can burst a faucet or the pipe it is connected to. Shut off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems.
- To maintain higher temperatures, add insulation to attics, basements, and crawl spaces. Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- Remember to wrap or cover outdoor faucets.
- Seal off air vents, cracks, and access doors. Repair broken basement windows. Winter wind and cold coming in through openings can quickly freeze exposed pipes. Do NOT plug air vents that your furnace or water heater need for good combustion!
- Protect indoor sink pipes that are against exterior walls by opening under-sink cabinet doors.
- During severe cold temperatures, consider letting one indoor faucet slowly drip water. Select the faucet that is farthest from your front door.
- If a water pipe breaks, immediately close the main shut-off valve to stop excessive flooding.

- During extreme cold, keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. If you are going to be away for any period of time, leave the heat set to a temperature no lower than 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

How to Thaw a Frozen Pipe Safely

- If your house or basement is flooding, turn off the water main shut off valve and call for help if you need it.
- If there is no flooding but you turn on a faucet and only a trickle comes out, make sure your main water valve is turned on. If it is, suspect a frozen pipe. Locate the suspected frozen area of the water pipe.
- Keep the faucet open. As you treat the frozen pipe and the frozen area begins to melt, water will begin to flow through the frozen area. Running water through the pipe will help melt more ice in the pipe.
- Apply heat to the section of pipe using an electric hair dryer, a portable space heater (kept away from flammable materials), or by wrapping pipes with towels soaked in hot water. **Do not use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or other open flame device.**
- Apply heat until full water pressure and flow is restored.
- If you are unable to locate the frozen area, if the frozen area is not accessible, or if you cannot thaw the pipe, call a licensed plumber.
- Check all other faucets in your home to find out if you have additional frozen pipes. If one pipe freezes, others may also freeze.

LONG TERM ABSENCES

Reasons to Turn Off the Water:

1. **Prevent Frozen Pipes:** If the temperature drops, water in the pipes can freeze and expand, leading to bursts that can cause significant damage.
2. **Avoid Water Damage:** Even small leaks can lead to water damage or mold growth if left unchecked.
3. **Peace of Mind:** Knowing that your water supply is off can provide reassurance while you're away.

Steps to Take:

- Turn the main water supply off. If you will really be gone a long time, call the District and ask the District to turn off your service on its side of the meter. This way we will know you are gone and you will qualify for a water leak billing adjustment if it is done improperly and you have a long term leak while you are gone.
- If you turn the water off please turn the power or gas supply off to the water heater
- If there will be no heat at all and your area gets below 27 to 28F it would be a good idea to drain the water heater, open the sinks, flush the toilets and open the outside hose bibs or faucets.

This will pull as much of the water out of the pipes possible and even if the water in the pipes freeze there won't be solid water to expand and break the pipes.

- For toilets and sink traps, consider using a non-toxic antifreeze to prevent any remaining water in traps and U bends from freezing.

GO THE EXTRA MILE

Draining all the water is not so simple. Even a small amount left in a sagging pipe, radiator or sink trap can cause big problems.

- Anything with flexible hoses washing machine, dishwasher, toilet cistern. If any of them burst coming home will be very unpleasant. Sure...when you think of all the ways water can leak...it's scary to think that this could happen with nobody there to notice and turn the water off. That little hose from the wall to your toilet? Cheap plastic most of the time...they get brittle with age and crack and break. There's one for every toilet in your house and two for each sink! And two more leading to your washing machine and one leading to your dishwasher and one leading to your fridge (if it's got an ice maker). If any one of these breaks, you're "hosed"! **Turn off these hoses at the stop cocks and check their condition before turning them back on when you return!**