Freezing Pipes

Be Prepared: Prevent Your Pipes From Freezing

- Disconnect all gardening hoses and install covers on all outside faucets.
- If there is an isolation shut-off valve for the hose bibs, shut it off and open the spigot to drain as much water from the line as possible.
- Keep your house temperature at 68 degrees or higher, even if you're leaving the house for an extended period of time.
- Whenever possible, and with maximum safety, use space heaters to keep temperatures above freezing in unheated interior areas (especially important in rise rooms and attic that are not climate controlled).
- Open cabinet doors below sinks and on outside walls 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.
- Leave faucets not just dripping, but at a slow flow. Running water freezes at a slower rate than stagnant water.
- Heat your basement and consider weather sealing your windows.
- Insulate outside walls and unheated areas of your home.
- Have salt on hand in a common location for hazardous areas (when precipitation is called for with freezing weather). Have a plan for who will be responsible for salt distribution. If necessary, have your gates held open to prevent damage to them.
- 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:

- As stated above, allow a faucet to drip at a slow flow (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.)
- · Alternatively, 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.
- Make sure to look around for signs of a water line break as the pipe thaws!

If a Pipe Bursts and You Have a Broken Water Line:

- Shut off water at the main valve. As pipes thaw, any breaks will become evident and not having additional water flooding the line will minimize the damage.
- 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.
- Use the salt you have available to spread on walkways, driveways and hazardous areas of private roads.
- Move any valuables to safety.
- Remove as much water as you are able. If needed, immediately bring in a water extraction company to quickly and efficiently dry the area.
- Notify your homeowners' insurance carrier. You may not need to open a claim if you aren't sure yet that the damages will exceed your deductible, but by putting them on notice, you secure your ability to file a claim should the damage reach that level.