

Avoid Frozen Water Pipe



The low temperatures and cold winds of winter can make your water pipes susceptible to freezing. And if a frozen pipe bursts, it can cause serious and expensive damage.

The best way to deal with frozen pipes is to prevent them in the first place, by running a thin flow of water from a faucet during the worst of the cold spell that can help prevent plumbing or water service lines from freezing. If you're away from home for several days, set your thermostat to at least 55 degrees to keep the interior plumbing warm enough. Open the cabinet doors to your sinks to allow the warm air to circulate around the plumbing lines.

If the unthinkable does happen, you'll have to act fast to thaw it before it ruptures.

How to Identify a Frozen Pipe

If you turn on the faucet and no water or only a slight trickle comes out, there may be a blockage of ice somewhere in your plumbing. If the pipes are exposed, such as pipes under sinks or in a basement, you may be able to see the frozen portion of the pipe. Frozen pipes often have frost on them or may have a slight bulge. If you can't locate the frozen pipe or it's not in an accessible location, you should call a licensed plumber.

How to Thaw a Frozen Pipe

If you have a frozen pipe that hasn't burst, you need to thaw the pipe as soon as possible. You can contact a licensed plumber or try to thaw it yourself. Here are some tips to help:

- Turn on the faucet serviced by the frozen line. This will relieve some pressure and, as the ice starts to melt and water begins to flow again, help melt the ice inside the pipe.
- Heat the general area by increasing the room temperature where the pipes are exposed or placing a portable heater or heat lamp in the room.
- Apply direct heat to the frozen pipe section using a space heater, heat lamp, heating pad, hairdryer, or heat tape.
- Always follow safety guidelines when using electric appliances. Never stand in water while using an electric appliance and never leave them unattended while in use.
- Never use a blow torch or open flame to thaw pipes. It creates a serious fire hazard and can cause more damage to the pipe.
- If you start to notice water leaking from the pipe as it thaws, then turn off the water supply to that section of plumbing or the entire house.

What to Do If a Frozen Pipe Bursts

Pipes burst when frozen because water expands when it freezes, adding considerable pressure inside the frozen pipe. That pressure can cause a pipe to rupture. If a frozen pipe bursts, shut your water off at the main valve immediately to minimize flooding. A very small leak can spew 250 gallons a day, and a bigger leak can waste much more, causing serious damage and wasting money. Unfortunately, you'll have to call a plumber to repair the damaged pipe. Contact one as soon as possible.

Frozen Meters

If your meter is not covered with snow and air gets into the meter box, the meter can freeze. If you experience a frozen meter or water line, you can call our office phone at 208-610-4561 for help.