

5 Ways to Prevent Frozen Pipes

Preventing frozen pipes is easier – and cheaper – than fixing the damage they cause. Protect your pipes, the cold weather has arrived!

- **Protect Outdoor Water Sources** Remove garden hoses from outdoor water faucets. Faucets are unable to drain properly when a hose is attached, which can lead to faucets freezing and breaking. After hoses are removed, cover all exterior faucets. Faucet covers are inexpensive, easy to install, and can be reused year after year. Some homes also have water shut-off valves that allow you to turn off water to outside faucets. If your home has an exterior shut off valve, turn off the water and drain pipes.
- **Insulate Pipes** Insulate pipes near your crawlspace, attic, and the exterior walls of your home. This is where the chance of freezing is greatest. Pipes can be insulated in a number of ways, including using snap-on foam insulation or UL approved heat tape. Be sure to follow manufacturers' installation instructions.
- **Turn Up the Thermostat** Keep your home heated to 55 °F or higher and open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around the plumbing.
- **Leave Water Running** Turn on hot and cold faucets near the exterior walls of your home and allow a small trickle of water to run overnight. This keeps water moving through your pipes and will relieve pressure should they freeze. Stagnant water freezes easier than running water.
- **Turn Off Water Supply and Drain System** If you will be away from home for an extended period, turn off the main water supply to the home and drain all pipes. We recommend this for those with secondary or vacation homes in Michigan.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PIPES FREEZE?

You may have frozen pipes if faucets or water lines do not work at all, water pressure is unusually low, or only a small amount of water trickles out. If you can see the pipes, they may be covered in frost as well.

Use these methods to thaw your frozen pipes:

- Open the faucet to allow water to flow. Even a slow trickle can help thaw frozen pipes.
- Try to warm the pipes by wrapping pipes in towels soaked in warm water or using a heating pad or hair dryer. Never try to thaw your pipes with a blowtorch or open flame.
- Check all faucets to see if other pipes are frozen. If one pipe has frozen, it's likely others could freeze too.
- Continue to warm pipes until water flows at normal pressure.

If you cannot find the frozen pipes or the frozen pipes are not accessible, contact a professional plumber immediately.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PIPES BURST?

Pipes usually burst between the main water supply line and the frozen section which can lead to significant water damage, especially if the water flows for a significant time.

- Turn off the main water supply line into your house to limit further damage.
- Be aware of the risk of electric shock when standing in or around water.
- Take photos of the area and inventory property and possessions damaged for your insurance claim.
- Contact a professional plumber or disaster mitigation expert to assess the damage and begin the restoration process.

If you have any questions about how your water system works or need help with these winterizing tips, contact a professional plumber. A little preventative maintenance can save you in the long run.