



Did you know ...

If a water line freezes and cracks, a 1-inch split along the side of the pipe could leak up to 50 gallons per minute at 60 PSI. If not fixed, this would result in more than 3000 gallons of water lost in one hour.



Source: Missouri Rural Water Association (<http://moruralwater.org>)

Preventing Frozen Water Pipes

Water pipes in unheated buildings or crawl spaces can freeze during cold temperatures. While this could result in simply an inconvenient loss of water, because water expands as it freezes, it can cause pipes to burst. This not only could lead to extensive water damage but also to an expensive water bill.

To help avoid problems due to frozen water lines, here are some tips to follow when the temperature dips below freezing:

- Let a thin stream of cold water run from a faucet. The stream should be a continuous flow, about the thickness of a pencil. This water can be caught in a bucket or pail to be recycled for another purpose later, if desired.
- Be sure pipes in unheated areas of the home or crawl space are insulated. Many hardware and home improvement stores carry pipe insulation products for this purpose.
- Leave interior cupboard doors under sinks open, especially if the water pipes are adjacent to an exterior wall. This will allow heat from the room access to the pipes.
- Plug drafty cracks and repair broken windows that could allow cold air to get inside where pipes are located.
- Shut off and drain pipes leading to outside faucets.
- If you leave your home for several weeks during the winter, have someone regularly check your home to be sure the heat is on and that no pipes have frozen or burst.

- You can also check with your local water department to see if they offer a seasonal shutoff service. If so, your water can be shut off at the street, then a plumber can come and drain your pipes/hot water tank.
- Know the location of the main water shutoff valve in your home. Check it periodically to ensure it works properly.

If you lose water service in one or more areas of the home, check to see if you can find the location of the frozen pipe. Common areas that freeze first are pipes located adjacent to exterior walls or where the water service line enters the home through the foundation.

If you are able to locate the frozen section, you can try to apply heat to the exposed pipe carefully, using one of the following methods:

- An electric hair dryer or light bulb
- Heat tape specifically designed for water lines (be sure to install according to the manufacturer's instructions)

Never use antifreeze to thaw a pipe, since it can contaminate the water supply and make it unsafe to drink. Also, don't attempt to thaw pipes with a torch or other open flame, as such methods risk starting a fire.

If you are unable to thaw the pipe yourself, contact your local water department, landlord, or a plumber for professional assistance.