



Preparing Your Pipes for Winter News You Can Use from Fort Wayne City Utilities

Is there anything more frustrating than waking up on a cold winter morning to find that you have no water because the pipes have frozen? Water pipes that are exposed to cold can freeze when the temperature drops to 20 or lower.

Taking a few simple steps before the snow flies can help protect your pipes.

1. Indoor Pipes

Inside your home, the pipes that are most vulnerable to freezing are those located in un-insulated spaces such as crawl spaces, basements, attics and garages, or in exterior walls.

Before cold weather arrives, insulate pipes in these exposed areas with foam insulation at a minimum. If you have experienced frozen pipes in the past, consider wrapping those pipes with electrical heating tape and then insulating them.

If you can't protect pipes before cold weather sets in, you may need to let the water run during very cold weather. Remember, hot water pipes can also freeze, so let a small steady stream of lukewarm water run. For sinks against outside walls, it may also help to open cabinet doors below the sink so warm air can circulate.

If you're taking a winter vacation, don't turn off the heat. Leaving the thermostat set to at least 55 can help keep pipes from freezing.

2. Water Meter

Customers of Fort Wayne City Utilities are responsible for making sure the water meter is protected from freezing. If the meter is in an unheated garage, keep the garage door closed to hold in as much heat as possible. Protect the meter in a basement or crawl space by closing off crawl space vents and doors, repairing broken windows and making sure basement doors and windows close tightly. You might also consider installing an insulated meter cover. If the meter does freeze, City Utilities customers may be charged more than \$130 for a replacement.

3. Gutters

Clean leaves and other debris out of the gutters so that they will be able to carry away melting snow and ice. Leaves and other material can freeze in a downspout causing the downspout to burst or causing the gutters to overflow. As part of cleaning the gutters, use a hose to spray a concentrated stream of water down the downspout to force out any potential blockages.

4. Exterior Faucets and Hoses

A dripping outdoor water faucet – also known as a hose bib or sill cock – can cause the faucet and water pipe that feeds it to freeze and break. Many hose bibs installed today are frost-free. If you have an older home turn off the water to the faucet inside the house if possible, then drain the

faucet by turning it on for a few moments. If there is no inside shut-off, consider putting an insulated cover over the hose bib.

Disconnect the garden hose. Leaving the hose connected to the outside faucet can cause water to remain in the faucet. If it freezes, it can burst the pipe. Protect the hose itself by disconnecting and draining it, especially if you plan to leave it outside during the winter. If the water freezes inside the hose it may cause the hose to split.

If a pipe does freeze despite all of your precautions, and you know where the freeze up is located, you may be able to thaw the pipe yourself, but it should be done slowly and carefully to avoid a pipe break. One option is to use a hand-held hair dryer. Blow the warm air over the pipe, keeping the dryer moving. Another method is to wrap the frozen pipe with towels or rags and pour warm water over it. This is messy, but may work. Finally, make sure everyone in the house knows where the master water shut-off valve is located. In case a pipe bursts, you can turn off the water. The master shut-off is usually located near where the water line enters the house. You may want to tag the valve with a bright color so you don't have to search for it.