



Winter Weather Tips

1. **Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses**

Detaching the hose allows water to drain from the pipe so an overnight freeze doesn't burst the faucet or the pipe it's connected to. Consider purchasing faucet covers from a local hardware store.

2. **Insulate pipes and faucets in unheated areas**

It's best to wrap all water pipes in unheated areas (such as the garage, attic or crawl space) before temperatures plummet. You can find pipe wrapping materials at most hardware or building supply stores. Even ¼" of newspaper can provide some degree of insulation and protection to exposed pipes.

3. **Consider installing "heat tape" or "heat cable"**

Install "heat tape" or similar materials on all exposed water pipe (i.e. exterior pipe, or pipe located where the temperature might drop below freezing). It is easy to install and can be purchased from your local hardware store. Be sure that you use only UL-listed products and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

4. **Eliminate cold air sources near water lines**

Seal cracks with caulk and weather-proofing near exposed pipes. Winter winds can quickly freeze exposed water pipes.

5. **Locate the shut-off valve**

The main shut off valve turns water off to the entire house. It can usually be found where the water line enters your house or near the water heater or washing machine. Paint it a bright color and make sure everyone in the household knows where it is. This can become especially important should you have a leak.

6. **Open cabinet doors**

Opening cabinet doors in the kitchen and bathroom allows warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners or chemicals away from the reach of children.

7. **What if it's too late?**

During extended cold weather events pipes can freeze even if you take all the proper precautions. If you turn on a faucet and only a trickle comes out, it is likely a frozen pipe. Keep the faucet open. As you treat the frozen pipe and the frozen area begins to melt, water will begin to flow through the frozen area. Running water through the pipe will help melt ice in the pipe. If you think you know where the freeze occurred and want to try thawing it yourself, the easiest tool to use is a hair dryer with a low heat setting or a portable space heater. DO NOT under any circumstances use an open flame. Using the hair dryer, wave the warm air back and forth along the pipe. DO NOT heat only one spot on the pipe, as this can cause it to burst. If you don't have a hair dryer or a space heater, wrap the frozen section with rags or towels and pour warm water over them. Be careful when heating the pipe. It may already be broken and just not leaking because the water is frozen. When you thaw it out, the water could come gushing out. Be ready to run for the master shutoff valve if necessary. If you are unable to find the frozen pipe or are uncomfortable thawing the pipe yourself contact a licensed plumber.