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Water Safety Tips for the Winter



How to Thaw Frozen Pipes

- If you turn on a faucet and only a trickle comes out, you may have a frozen pipe. Likely places for frozen pipes include against exterior walls or where your water service enters your home through the foundation.
- 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.
- Apply heat to the section of pipe using an electric heating pad wrapped around the pipe, an electric hair dryer, a portable space heater (kept away from flammable materials), or by wrapping pipes with towels soaked in hot water. Never use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or other open flame device.
- Apply heat until full water pressure is restored. If you are unable to locate the frozen area, if the frozen area is not accessible or if you cannot thaw the pipe, call a licensed plumber.
- Check all other faucets in your home to find out if you have additional frozen pipes. If one pipe freezes, others may freeze, too.

For more winter safety resources, visit:
www.iccsafe.org/winter-safety-resources

While some of us may enjoy the winter for skiing or huddling in front of a fireplace with a mug of hot chocolate, don't forget about the season's dangers.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that thousands die each year from exposure to extreme cold or from carbon monoxide poisoning due to faulty heating units. Deadly fires are also a danger due to space heaters or homeowners using torches to thaw frozen pipes. A dangerous inconvenience, frozen pipes can reduce the performance level of your hot water heater, halt the daily functions of your household and cause damaging leaks that can cause a buildup of mold or mildew.

Within the 2018 International Plumbing Code (IPC), the installation of water, soil and waste pipes is restricted in the following areas unless there are adequate provisions made to protect such pipes from freezing. These areas include:

- Outside of a building
- In attics or crawl spaces
- Concealed in outside walls
- In any location subjected to freezing temperatures.

Making sure your home is built to the most recent code will keep your family safe in the winter. Following these tips from the American Red Cross for frozen pipes will also ensure your family's comfort during the cold winter months.



How to Avoid Frozen Pipes

- Drain water from swimming pool and water sprinkler supply lines following manufacturer's or installer's directions. Do not put antifreeze in these lines unless directed. Antifreeze is environmentally harmful and is dangerous to humans, pets, wildlife and landscaping.
- Remove, drain and store hoses used outdoors.
- Add insulation to attics, basements and crawl spaces. Insulation will maintain higher temperatures in these areas.
- Check around the home for other areas where water supply lines are in unheated areas. Look in the garage, and under kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Both hot and cold water pipes in these areas should be insulated.
- Consider installing specific products made to insulate water pipes like a pipe sleeve or installing heat tape, heat cable or similar materials on exposed water pipes. Pro tip: Newspaper can provide some degree of insulation and protection to exposed pipes – even ¼" of newspaper can provide significant protection in areas that usually do not have frequent or prolonged temperatures below freezing.
- Consider relocating exposed pipes to provide increased protection from freezing.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing.
- When the weather is very cold outside, let the cold water drip from the faucet served by exposed pipes. Running water through the pipe – even a trickle – helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night.
- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat set to a temperature no lower than 55.