

Protect Water Meters and Pipes from Freezing Temperatures

When outdoor temperatures drop below freezing (32°Fahrenheit) and especially if temperatures fall below zero, you may need to take precautions to protect your water meter and the water pipes inside your home from freezing. Water pipes in basements, unheated crawl spaces and outside walls may be especially susceptible to freezing. Here are some tips to protect yourself against potentially costly plumbing issues.

Protect your water meter -- If your water meter is located in an unheated or minimally heated area such as a crawl space or garage, make sure it is properly covered or protected to keep it from freezing. The meter is your responsibility and you are liable for any damage to the meter.

Eliminate drafts -- Close crawl space vents and openings. Repair broken or cracked windows. Make sure basement doors close tightly.

Insulate pipes in unheated areas -- Wrapping electrical heat tape or insulation around pipes that run through crawl spaces, garages or unheated basements may help prevent freezing.

It's important to remember that both hot and cold water pipes may freeze. Here are some ideas to reduce the chances that pipes will freeze:

Let the water run -- Leaving a small but steady stream of lukewarm water running will keep the water moving through the pipes.

Open doors below sinks -- If a sink is located against an outside wall, opening cabinet doors below the sink can help warm air get to the pipes. This may also reduce the chances that a drain pipe will freeze.

Find the master shut-off inside your home and verify that it works properly -- The master shut-off is usually located near the place where the water service line enters your house. If it does not work, it may need to be repaired or replaced. Consider tagging the valve handle a bright color and tell family members where it is. Then if a pipe freezes and breaks, you can turn the water off at the master shut off valve.

If you turn on the tap on a cold day and no water comes out (and your water bills have been paid) your pipes may have frozen. Before doing anything you may want to check with your neighbors to find out if they have water. If they are also without water, please call Eagle Point Water Plant at 563.589.4291 to determine if a water main in your area is shut down for repair. This could be causing the water outage.

If there is no repair work being done, or the neighbors have water, you may have a frozen pipe in your house or in the water service line under your yard.

If you know where the freeze is and it is inside your building, you may be able to thaw the pipe. Thawing should be done slowly to avoid bursting the pipe. One suggestion is to wrap the frozen section with an approved electrical heat tape. Be ready to shut off water at the master shut-off if the pipe breaks.

If you cannot determine where the freeze is located, or if you believe it is in the water line outside your house, you will need to call a plumber. If your plumber cannot locate the freeze and thaw it, they may need to call City Utilities for assistance. However, it is your responsibility to attempt to resolve the issue first.