



## WINTERIZE YOUR WATER PIPES

Every winter, many homeowners face the expense and inconvenience of frozen water pipes - make sure you're not one of them by taking a few simple precautions.

### **Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses**

If you have been using your garden hose during recent warm weather to wash the car or winter water your trees and shrubs, be sure to disconnect it, allowing the water to drain from the pipe so an overnight freeze doesn't burst the faucet or the pipe it's connected to.

### **Insulate pipes or faucets in unheated areas**

It's best to wrap water pipes in unheated areas (such as the garage or crawl space) before temperatures plummet. You can find pipe wrapping materials at any hardware or building supply store.

### **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 relatively easy to install and can be found at your local hardware or building supply store. Be sure that you use only UL-listed products and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

### **Seal off access doors, air vents, and cracks**

Winter winds whistling through overlooked openings can quickly freeze exposed water pipes. DO NOT plug air vents used by your furnace or water heater.

### **Find the master shutoff valve**

Usually located where the water line enters your house, the master shutoff valve turns off the water to the entire house. Paint it a bright color and make sure everyone in the household knows where it is.

### **What if it's too late?**

During an extended cold spell, your pipes can freeze, even if you take all the proper precautions. 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. 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, you can wrap the frozen section with rags or towels and pour hot water over them. It's messy, but it works.

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.