

# WINTERIZING YOUR PIPES

## Why Winterize Each Year?

Cold weather preparedness for your home (inside and outside) is an important maintenance for your home that should be done before the onset of winter. Due to inclement weather in our region, pipes can freeze or break. Icy winds and dipping temperatures can do a lot of damage to your home by freezing pipes and leaving you without flowing water.

When water freezes in a pipe it expands, and if it expands enough the pipe bursts and water escapes leaving damaging results to your home.

Before an emergency takes place at your home, there are many precautions you can take to help minimize freezing weather damages. Steps you can take are listed under the section titled "Before the Cold Hits."

If a water pipe broke in your home, could you find the shutoff valve? Know where it is located before you have an emergency.

**Locate The Shut Off Valve** If pipes burst, water could begin to pour into your house and time would be critical in preventing damage to walls, floors, or carpet. The most likely locations for the shutoff valve are:

- Where the water supply enters your home.
- In the garage where the water line enters the wall or ceiling.
- Near your clothes washer hookup.
- Near your water heater.

Try turning this valve off and on in advance to make sure you have found the right one. Mark it with paint, a tag, or ribbon and make sure everyone in the family knows where it is. If you are unable to locate your shutoff valve, you may want to contact your builder or plumber for assistance.

## If You're Away

Set the thermostat in your house no lower than 55 degrees. Ask a friend or neighbor to check your house daily to make sure it is warm enough to prevent freezing, or shut off and drain the water system in your house. Don't forget to shut off power to the hot water tank.

**Before the Cold Hits** Insulate pipes in your home's crawl spaces and attic. These exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing.

- The more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be.
- Heat tape or thermostatically-controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure to use products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturers' installation and operation instructions.
- Seal leaks that allow cold air inside, near where pipes are located. Look for air leaks around electrical wiring, dryer vents and pipes. Use caulk or insulation to keep the cold out and the heat in. With severe cold, a tiny opening can let in enough cold air to cause a pipe to freeze.
- Disconnect garden hoses and, if practical, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house.

**When the Mercury Drops** A trickle of hot and cold water might be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall. Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to uninsulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.



## City of Camas Water Department

**Business hours 8:00 am -5:00 pm M-F**

**Phone: 360-817-1567**

**After hours call 737-0592**

**What to Do If Your Pipes Freeze** Don't panic! If you can get to the frozen pipe, chances are you will be able to thaw it yourself. Frozen pipes usually feel extremely cold which helps you to locate the freeze. Use any safe source of heat and apply slowly to avoid bursting.

**NEVER USE DIRECT FLAME OR BOILING WATER TO THAW PIPES. THIS COULD CAUSE THEM TO BURST AND FLOOD YOUR HOME.**

Open the faucet closest to the freeze and try one or more of the following ideas. And be patient. It may take several hours for the pipes to thaw.

1. Soak a heavy cloth or towel in hot water and wrap it around the pipe. Slowly pour hot but never boiling water over the cloth. You can heat the water on the stove or in the microwave.
2. Use a portable hair dryer and slowly apply its heat to the pipe.
3. If the freeze is under the sink, put one or two large pots of boiling water inside the cabinet. The steam will help the pipe to thaw.
4. Check your meter. If the bottom is cracked, the meter is frozen. Call the City of Camas Water Department at 360-817-1567 (**do not** try to repair the meter yourself).
5. If the freeze is behind a wall and you can't get to it, you will probably have to call a plumber to thaw it. You could do it yourself by carefully opening a hole in the wall and getting some heat to the freeze, but you will have to cope with repairs to the wall.