

Preventing Frozen Water Pipes

Now that the chill of winter is here, many of us are thinking about the water pipes in our homes and businesses and what can be done to reduce the chance of frozen water pipes. An effective and easy measure is to insulate exposed water pipes using pre-made foam insulators sold at hardware stores and home centers. With the weather we typically experience here in Lake County this is usually sufficient. Extra measures including insulating pipes within crawl spaces or exterior walls is advisable in areas prone to colder temperatures in the county or in the event we are hit with unusual colder temperatures. Small insulated enclosures for outside faucets and pipes (also available at hardware stores and home centers) are advisable.

If there is a freeze warning, another simple method to help prevent frozen pipes is to keep the water moving in your pipes. You can do this by leaving cold water taps dripping overnight or during cold spells.

If your pipes freeze, they should be thawed out as soon as possible to prevent cracking. To thaw frozen pipes:

Locate the suspected frozen area of the water pipe (commonly adjacent to exterior walls, or where your water service enters your home through the foundation). Apply heat to the suspected section of pipe with one of the following methods:

(USING PROPERLY GROUNDED ELECTRICAL OUTLETS)

- an electric heating pad, wrapped around the pipe.
- an electric hair dryer set on low setting.
- a portable heater (be sure it is placed far away from flammable materials).

Always leave a cold water tap downstream of that location open, so you know that the pipe has thawed when the water begins flowing again.

Important Note: Never use open flames in the home or any confined space due to the fire hazard and risk from combustion fumes.

If you are unable to locate the frozen section of pipe, or are unsure of what to do, contact a licensed plumber for assistance. When the weather warms up, check unused portions of your water system for freezing damage and leaks to avoid possible flooding damage from undetected split pipes.

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