

FROZEN WATER PIPES

Frigid temperatures and gusty winds can cause one of winter's worst problems; frozen water pipes. During the winter's cold, more and more home and business owners may encounter frozen water pipes.

Property owners can take some simple precautions to prevent the inconvenience and expense of frozen water pipes

According to the New England Water Works Association, property owners can take these simple steps to help protect homes and businesses:

1. Turn off outside faucets.

Disconnect the hose. Turn off the water from inside your home or business, then drain the pipe. Leave the outside valve open slightly, so any water left in the pipe can flow out and not freeze in the line.

2. Patch any cracks and holes in doors, windows, and walls near pipes.

When temperatures drop to near zero, a high wind blowing through a small opening can freeze a nearby pipe. When patching these openings, do not block the air vents that your furnace needs for proper combustion.

3. Make sure that heat can circulate around pipes.

Pipes inside or outside walls, or in an enclosed area can freeze, especially when the wind-chill factor is well below zero and heat is not circulating through these areas.

4. Insulate pipes and faucets in unheated areas.

Wrap pipes with pipe-insulating material, which is available at hardware and plumbing supply stores, or use insulation. Be sure to protect all pipes in unheated areas, such as crawl spaces and garages.

5. Do not allow your water to run overnight

This practice will not necessarily prevent pipes from freezing. Instead, it wastes water and increases your water bill.

6. Check insulation around pipes regularly.

Older-model furnaces generated sufficient heat to warm basements in cold weather. However, today's energy-efficient heaters limit wasted heat. Homeowners with wood stoves or other heat sources often turn down the furnace, which could lower temperatures in the basement.

7. Never shut off your heat completely.

If you are planning to leave your home or business for an extended period and you don't drain your pipes, you should lower the thermostat but never shut it off. The lack of heat can freeze the pipes in walls and the basement. If freezing occurs, the pipes will burst. When the area warms up, the thawing water will cause flooding and possible property damage. If your pipes do freeze, it is best to call a licensed plumber. If you find where the pipe is frozen and try to thaw it yourself, be sure to take the following precautions to protect yourself and your property

Do not use a torch with an open flame. You risk setting your property on fire. In addition, overheating one area can cause the pipe to burst.

Place a warm towel or rag around the pipe.

Know the location of your shut-off valve. The pipe may already be broken and, once thawed, it will leak. Shut off the water in your home or business until the leaking pipe is repaired.

For more information on how you can prevent frozen water pipes, contact MaryBeth Wisser at the Rochester Water Treatment Plant at 335-4291.

Source: New England Water Works Association



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