



You Can Prevent Frozen Water Pipes

Your carpets are soaked. Your furniture's ruined. You have to walk through six inches of water in your kitchen. You have fallen victim to a catastrophe, but it wasn't a flood or hurricane. It was a ruptured water pipe. You could have avoided this disaster.

Frozen pipes aren't just an inconvenience. An average of a quarter-million families have their homes ruined and lives disrupted each winter because of water pipes that freeze and rupture. An eight-inch crack in a water pipe can spew up to 250 gallons of water a day, wrecking floors, furniture and keepsakes. Both plastic (PVC) and copper pipes can rupture.

Imagine if your pipes were to freeze and rupture while you were on vacation. Your homecoming would be a soggy one and your calls to a plumber would be followed by calls to a contractor, carpet layer, painter and furniture store, to name a few. Damages most likely would be so severe that you and your family would have to move out of your home while repairs are made.

By taking a few simple precautions, you can save yourself the mess, money and aggravation frozen pipes cause. Here are a few simple steps to protect your home or apartment.

Before The Cold Hits

Insulate - pipes in your home's crawl space and attic. These exposed pipes are most susceptible. The more insulation you use, the better protected your pipe will be.

Heat Tape - or thermostatically controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure the products are approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriter Laboratory, Inc.

Seal - leaks that allow cold air inside where pipes are located. Look for leaks around wiring, dryer vents and pipes. Use caulk or insulation to keep the cold out and the heat in.

Disconnect - garden hoses and if practical, use an indoor valve to shut off the drain pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span or pipe just inside the house.

When the Mercury Drops

A trickle - of hot or 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.

If You're Away

Set - the thermostat in your home no lower than 55 degrees (12 degrees Celsius).

Ask - a friend or neighbor to check your house daily to make sure it's warm enough to prevent freezing.

Shut Off - and drain the water system. Be aware that if you have a fire protection sprinkler system in your house, it will be deactivated when you shut off the water.

If Your Pipes Freeze

Don't Take Chances - If you turn on your faucet and nothing comes out, leave the faucet on and call a plumber. If you detect that your water pipes have frozen and ruptured, turn off the water at the main shut off valve in the house. Leave the water faucet turned on. Make sure everyone in your family knows where the water shut off valve is and how to open and close it.

Never - try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other flame. Water damage is preferable to burning down your house. You may be able to thaw a pipe with warm air from a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipes as close to the faucet as possible, working towards the coldest section of the pipe.

Do Not Use - electrical appliances in areas of standing water because you could be electrocuted.

For more information about American Family's Loss Control Services, visit www.amfam.com

DISCLAIMER

The recommendations printed here follow generally accepted safety standards. Compliance with these recommendations does not guarantee that you will be in conformance with any building code, or federal, state or local regulations regarding safety or fire. Compliance does not ensure the absolute safety of you, and your home.