

Tips To Prevent Freezing Water Lines



With extreme winter weather conditions and subfreezing temperatures along the Wasatch Front, plumbing within homes and sprinkler systems will freeze. Water has a unique property in that it expands as it freezes. This expansion puts tremendous pressure on whatever is containing it, including metal or plastic pipes. No matter the "strength" of the material, expanding water can cause pipes to break. Pipes that freeze most frequently are those that are exposed to severe cold, such as outdoor hose bibs or spigots, swimming pool supply lines, water sprinkler lines, and water supply pipes in unheated interior areas like basements, crawl spaces, attics, garages, or kitchen cabinets. Pipes that run against exterior walls that have little or no insulation are also subject to freezing. Frozen pipes can leave the home without water or cause the lines to break and flood the home. To prevent this from happening, please take some precautionary steps. Frozen water pipes are inconvenient and costly to repair. Here are some ways to both prevent frozen pipes and thaw those that are already frozen.

Suggested methods to help prevent frozen water lines:

- Disconnect all outside hoses from your hose bib in the winter, or before the temperature drops below freezing. The residual water inside the hose can freeze, and once frozen it will continue back into the spigot until it reaches your pipes where it has a potential to cause the line to burst.



- Insulate exterior hose bibs. Remove, drain, and store hoses used outdoors. If available, close inside valves supplying outdoor hose bibs. Open the outside hose bib to allow water to drain.
- Make sure sprinkler systems are shut off and properly drained. Drain water from sprinkler supply lines by means of the “Stop & Waste Valve” or main sprinkler supply valve. This valve is typically located a few feet behind the culinary water meter. Do not put antifreeze in these lines; antifreeze is dangerous to humans, pets, wildlife, and landscaping.
- Check around the home for other areas where water supply lines are located in unheated areas. Look in the basement, crawl space, attic, garage, and under kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Both hot and cold water pipes in these areas should be insulated. Insulate all water pipes from cold moving air and keep them dry. Insulate plumbing near open, uninsulated exterior walls such as in the basement. Locate the main water shut off valve in case you need it.
- When the weather reaches sub-freezing temperatures, allow a cold water tap to run inside your home. A continuous stream, about half the diameter of a pencil, will keep water flowing through the pipes. Running water through the pipe, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move harmful cleaners and household chemicals out of the reach of children.
- Keep the thermostat set higher at night when temperatures are sub-freezing. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair if pipes freeze and burst.
- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55° F.
- If freezing lines continue to be a problem or if you are unable to properly maintain the temperature around the pipe, consider installing specific products made to insulate water pipes like a "pipe sleeve" or UL Listed "heat tape," "heat cable," or similar materials on exposed water pipes. Ensure that materials are installed to manufactures recommendations to prevent possible damage or injury.

Suggested methods to thaw frozen water lines:

- If you turn on a faucet and only a trickle comes out or you suspect a water line may be frozen, look for likely locations for frozen water lines to occur. Locations may include, against exterior walls or where the water line enters your home through the foundation.



- If a water line is suspected to be frozen, first check the pipe in the area of the freeze. Pipes may have split due to expanding ice and will flood the area when thawed. If the pipe looks broken or split, make repairs.
- Check all faucets in your home to find additional frozen pipes. If one pipe freezes, others may freeze.
- If no water comes from the faucet or very little water comes from it, keep the faucet open. As you treat the frozen pipe, the frozen area will begin to thaw and water will begin to flow through the pipe. The running water will help thaw the ice in the pipe.
- Apply heat to the frozen section of pipe using an electric heat pad wrapped around the pipe, electric hair dryer, portable space heater (keep away from flammable materials), or by wrapping pipes with towels soaked in hot water. Do not use a torch, flammable liquid, propane heater, charcoal stove, or other open flame device. Apply heat until full water pressure is restored. If you are unable to locate or access the frozen area of the pipe or you cannot thaw the pipe, you may need to call a licensed plumber.

Use caution when applying heat generating devices. Space heaters, heat lamps and reflective lamps can generate extremely high temperature and may ignite combustible materials. Never leave these devices unattended for any length of time.

Being prepared and informed may help you avoid potential damage and expensive repairs.

If you experience water related issues, please contact Public Works at 801-229-7500 during normal business hours. If you need assistance after business hours, contact Public Safety at 801-229-7070.