



HOW TO PREVENT FROZEN PIPES THIS WINTER

As temperatures drop, frozen pipes become a serious risk. A burst pipe can release hundreds of gallons of water per minute and cause extensive damage, especially if you're away for the holidays. The good news: a few simple steps can prevent most issues.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS

The water service (or "lateral") connects your property to the City's water system. During extended cold weather, this underground pipe is at risk of freezing. Interior pipes can also freeze, especially those near exterior walls or in unheated areas like basements, crawl spaces, and cellars.

To help prevent freezing:

- Run cold water from an indoor faucet for about five minutes, two to three times a day, especially during periods of low water use.
- Watch for early warning signs like reduced pressure or discolored water. If they occur, run cold water until clarity and normal flow return.

During extreme cold or long periods with little water use, let a small, continuous stream of cold water run (the width of a pencil) to prevent freezing.

INSIDE YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS

Interior piping and the water meter can freeze without adequate heat and insulation. To protect them:

- Maintain heat in basements, utility rooms, crawl spaces, and other vulnerable areas at 55°F or higher.
 - Seal gaps where cold air enters, repair broken windows, weather-seal doors, and insulate openings.
 - Disconnect outdoor hoses, close interior shutoff valves to outside faucets, and open exterior taps.
 - Use foam pipe insulation on pipes located near exterior walls or unheated areas.
 - If additional protection is needed, use UL-listed heat tape or heat cables according to the manufacturer's instructions. Inspect heat tape annually and replace if worn.
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IF YOU'RE AWAY FOR PART OR ALL OF THE WINTER SEASON

- Keep your thermostat at 55°F or higher.
 - Have someone inspect the property periodically to verify the heat is working and plumbing is intact.
 - For extended vacancies, consider having a licensed plumber shut off the water, remove the meter, and drain the interior plumbing.
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PLEASE NOTE: If water does not come out of a faucet or toilet in the winter, you may have a frozen pipe.

HOW TO SAFELY THAW FROZEN PIPES

- **Locate the Freeze:** Find your main water meter and trace your pipes. Look for visible frost, bulges, or ice on the exterior of the plumbing.
- **Open the Faucet:** Before heating, fully open a nearby faucet. Keeping it open relieves dangerous pressure in the line and gives the melting water a place to escape.
- **Attempt to Thaw:** If you find frost on the pipes (either before or after the meter), you may attempt to thaw them using a hair dryer or portable space heater.
 - **FOLLOW SAFETY AT ALL TIMES:**
 - Locate your main water shut-off valve, typically near the water meter, and be ready to turn it off immediately if you spot a split pipe.
 - Always keep the heat moving along the pipe, and **NEVER USE an open flame or torch.**
 - Use extreme caution around standing water to avoid electric shock.
- **Contact a Professional if Gentle Heating Fails:**
 - Please contact the La Crosse Utilities Business Office at (608) 789-7536 for non-life-threatening emergencies, such as a frozen underground service line (indicated by frost around the water meter).
 - Contact a licensed plumber for emergency assistance if you find frost on pipes elsewhere in the home.