

Protecting Your Waterlines From Frigid Temps

Before the Cold Hits

Water lines are susceptible to freezing and bursting when the air temperature reaches below-freezing (32 degrees F.) With the arctic cold-front anticipated this coming weekend, now is the time to prepare.

Here are some helpful ideas to prevent frozen waterlines:

A trickle of water might be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let cold water drip overnight, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall. This keeps water moving inside lines and helps prevent freezing.

Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

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

Heat tape or thermostatically-controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. This is an easy solution. Use only as intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturers' installation and operation instructions. If you already have heat tape installed on pipes make sure it is plugged in and operating correctly.

You also may need to insulate your water pipes in the attic and basement, depending on how well those areas of your home are insulated. Inexpensive foam insulation specially made for piping is available at most hardware stores and can be easily secured using electrical tape. Insulate pipes in your home's crawl spaces and attic. These exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing. Remember: The more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be.

Seal leaks that allow cold air inside, near where pipes are located. Look for air leaks around electrical wiring, dryer vents and pipes. Use caulk, spray foam or insulation to keep the cold out and the heat in. With severe cold, a tiny opening can let in enough cold air to cause a pipe to freeze.

If you live in a mobile home, underpinning or something to block the cold wind around the home needs to be in place. You will also want to use as many of the above suggestions as possible because mobile homes tend to be more susceptible than traditional foundation built homes.

If you plan to be away from your home- set the thermostat in your house no lower than 55 degrees.

If you suspect that your waterline may have frozen, do not attempt to thaw the line with a torch or open flame which can lead to fires or damage to the water line. Instead try using a hair dryer- start from the faucet and work your way down the line (never use electrical appliances in areas of standing water because you could be electrocuted).

If you discover a leak and cannot shut off the line in your house (most homes have a main shut-off valve where the water line enters the home) contact the City of Huntingburg Water Department at 812-683-2327 and water personnel will respond to turn off the water at your meter.

Todd Williams
City of Huntingburg
Water Utilities Superintendent