



Preventing Frozen Pipes

YOU CAN PREVENT FROZEN PIPES

Frozen pipes aren't just an inconvenience. An average of a quarter-million families have their homes damaged and their lives disrupted each winter...all because of water pipes that freeze.

An eighth-inch (three millimeter) crack in a pipe can spew up to 250 gallons (946 liters) of water a day, destroying floors, furniture, and personal property. Both plastic (PVC) and copper pipes may burst.

Before the Cold Hits...

INSULATE pipes in crawl spaces and attics. These exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing. Remember: The more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be.

HEAT TAPE or thermostatically-controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure to use products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturer's installation and operating instructions.

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 or insulation to keep the cold out and the heat in. With severe wind chill, a tiny opening can let in enough cold air to cause a pipe to freeze.

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.

When the Mercury drops...

A TRICKLE of hot and 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 no lower than 55 (12 degrees Celsius).

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

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 faucets and nothing comes out, leave the faucets turned on and call a plumber. If you detect that your water pipes have frozen and burst, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve in the house; leave the water faucets turned on. (Make sure everyone in your family knows where the water shut-off valve is and how to open and close it.)

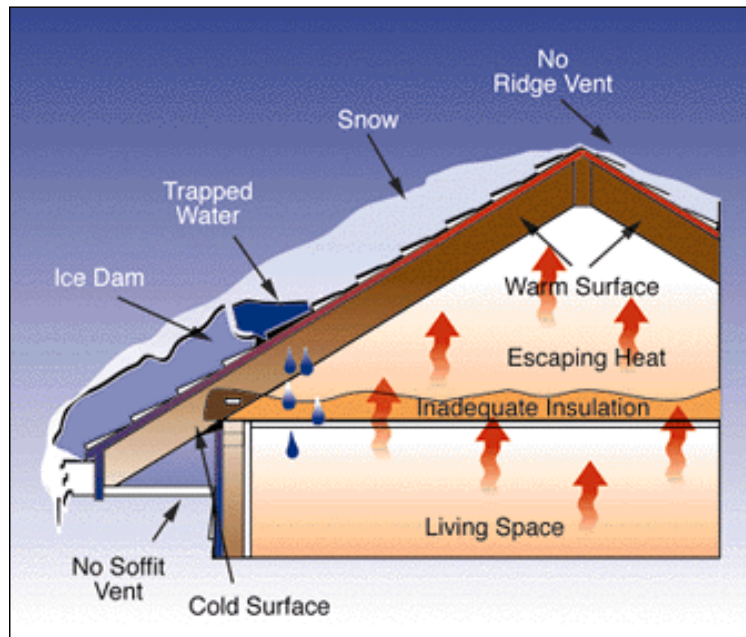
NEVER try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame. Water damage is preferable to fire damage. You may be able to thaw a frozen pipe with the warm air from a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe.

DO NOT use electrical appliances in areas of standing water because you could be electrocuted.

Hot Tips for Preventing Cold Weather Damage



Preventing Roof Ice Dams



Prevent Ice Dams

Ice dams are most common in northern climates. They occur when heavy snow buildup melts during the day and then refreezes when temperatures drop overnight.

After several days of melting-freezing cycles, it's common for the melted water and ice to work up under the shingles until water enters the attic and eventually does damage to the ceilings, wall and contents. In cases where the ice dam goes unnoticed for an extended period of time, it can do significant damage to the building and its contents.

There's no way to guarantee an ice dam won't damage your home, but you can take steps to cut the chances of an ice dam forming in the first place:

- If you haven't already, thoroughly clean all leaves, sticks and other debris from your home's gutters and down spouts. This allows melting roof snow to flow into gutters and through down spouts.
- Make every effort to keep snow on your roof to a minimum. Long-handled devices on the market called "roof rakes" let you stand on the ground and pull the snow off the roof. Keeping heavy snow loads off your roof reduces the chances for both ice dam formation and roof failure due to the weight.
- All winter long, keep gutters and down spouts clear of snow and icicles.
- Evaluate the insulation and ventilation in your attic. Most experts agree the R-value of attic insulation should be at least R-30 (R-38 is preferable in northern climates). In addition, good airflow from under the eaves or soffit area along the underside of the roof and out through the roof vents is essential. The insulation prevents heat loss from the interior of the home. The venting allows the attic air to stay cold enough to prevent or minimize the freeze/thaw cycle on the roof. Consult a reputable roofing and/or insulation contractor about these improvements.