

Winterization Tips

Frozen pipes are a common occurrence during sub-zero weather. Insulation is an obvious benefit, but won't by itself prevent pipes from freezing if they are too exposed to the elements.

It is recommended that homeowners keep a heat source close by. In the case of bathroom pipes enclosed in vanities or cabinets, leave the doors open in frigid weather so the heat from the room can penetrate the enclosures.

Professional contractors sell pipe wrappings imbedded with electrical coils to provide an outside source of heat. This works fine, but if you forget to plug in the device with the approach of a cold front, or if there's an electrical power interruption - as often occurs during severe weather - the product won't work.

If the pipe does freeze, it is recommended that you try defrosting it with an electrical hair dryer. For safety, be sure the dryer is grounded and never hold the pipe while operating an electrical appliance.

To prevent the pipe from bursting, turn off the water supply to that line. Be careful, however, if you use a boiler for heating, it must have continual water supply to operate.

It is suggested that you don't turn off the main household supply, just the valve leading to the frozen line. If you're unsure how to do this, you should call a plumbing contractor.

Also remember that running water does not freeze very readily. During severe cold weather, you may want to keep a stream of water trickling out of faucets or spouts attached to vulnerable pipes. This wastes water, but it may be preferable to a burst pipe.

SUGGESTIONS FOR AVOIDING FROZEN PIPES

- Turn off the water supply at the main shutoff valve. In most buildings this is found on the side of the building nearest the street.
- Shut off the furnace or boiler and the current or gas to the water heater.
- Flush all toilets and every faucet in the home, including outdoor faucets. Be sure to remove garden hoses because faucets cannot drain properly with a hose in place.
- Drain the water heater.
- With a boiler open, open all the radiator valves and remove the air-escape valve from radiators on the highest floor of the house. Then drain the boiler. To do a thorough job, use an air compressor to blow water from the system. After the system is empty, open the drain valve on the main supply line.
- Empty the toilet bowels by siphoning or bailing and sponging. Pour a mixture of special RV antifreeze (not automobile antifreeze) and water into all toilet bowels and traps of all sinks, showers, and bathtubs. **DO NOT DRAIN THESE TRAPS - THE WATER KEEPS SEWER GASES OUT OF THE BUILDING.**

Disclaimer: The Plum Creek Municipal Authority will not be responsible for adverse results resulting from the implementation of suggestions included in this fact sheet.