

Taking Care of Your Home Plumbing During Cold Weather

From the Frisco Water Department

The same natural forces that trigger cold weather breaks in the Town of Frisco's underground water mains can cause pipes to burst in your own household or business plumbing.

So take it from us: Don't fall into a winter cold snap unprepared. Prevent the property damage, repair bills and inconvenience of bursting household pipes. Here are some tips:

- Know the location of your water shut-off valve and be sure it is operable. In case the worst happens and a pipe breaks, you won't want to wait for someone to arrive at the location to find it for you. In most single-family homes, the shut-off valve is in the basement or crawlspace at the water meter location.
- Turn off and drain automatic and manual sprinkler systems before the first freeze. You'll thank yourself in the spring. The freezing-and-thawing cycle can create cracks and weak spots in the sprinkler system, triggering silent underground leaks or mini-geysers at first thaw.
- Turn off outdoor faucets and be sure to disconnect hoses. Make sure the faucet and outside piping is fully drained. There are valves at the water meter location inside the house that will shut off the water's flow. Disconnect the hose to assure that freeze-proof faucets will drain.
- Winterize unheated or vacant buildings. Significant property damage and water loss can occur before burst pipes are discovered. Most susceptible are fire protection systems.
- Insulate water pipes that may be vulnerable to the cold or have caused problems before. Pipes close to exterior walls or in unheated basements can be wrapped with pieces of insulation. Don't overlook pipes near windows, which can quickly freeze. For particularly difficult pipes, consult a professional on how to select and apply heat tape. Improper use of heat tape can cause fires.

During a deep freeze (-5 degrees and colder):

- Keep open cabinet doors leading to exposed pipes so that household air can warm them.
- The natural flow of warmer air will help combat problems.

- Keep attached garage doors shut. Occasionally, plumbing is routed there, leaving it vulnerable to winter's wrath.
- Keep thermostats set above 65 degrees when leaving your house or business for several days.

If you think a pipe has already frozen:

- Don't wait for nature to take its course: thaw the pipe as soon as possible or call a plumber for help. If you thaw yourself, shut off the water or test the shut-off valve to make sure it works before beginning work.
- In thawing, slow is best. A hair dryer trained at the frozen area of the pipe is appropriate. A blowtorch is not. Pipes that warm too fast can break anyway.