

# AVOID A WINTER FREEZE DISASTER CHECKLIST



Homeowners in the Dallas metroplex know that the winters are mostly mild here. But we do get a few cold snaps and this can be more damaging to the homes of us warm climate dwellers than those who are typically more accustomed to the colder climates. The reason for that is because in these warmer climates the plumbing is often installed un-insulated or under-insulated. That means that when we DO get those brief cold snaps, our exposed water lines for the most part are completely unprepared to withstand the freezing temperatures. The most danger is for our above ground, exposed water lines, like the ones in attics and crawl spaces. However, sometimes the exterior walls of our homes are so under-insulated that those pipes that run through exterior walls could be at risk as well.

The following checklist was created to aide you in protecting your water pipes in preparation for a hard freeze to drastically reduce the chance of property damage from burst pipes.

## BEFORE THE FREEZE TO DO'S:

- Disconnect all garden hoses from exterior faucets. Drain hoses and store away.
- If exterior faucet has a leak, have repaired or replaced before freeze weather.
- Drain the water from pipes flowing to outside faucets if possible.
- (Option for those who have an interior shut off valve for exterior faucets)
- Wrap or insulate exterior faucets and pipes to help keep them from freezing.
- Seal or repair any areas that allow cold air to leak in near pipes.
- Check for air leaks from broken windows, cracks in walls, near dryer vents and pipes, near pipes leading to crawl spaces, near electrical wiring leading to outside, attic, or crawl space.
- Close outside vents, crawl spaces and other doors so air doesn't seep inside.
- Wrap or Insulate pipes in the home's unheated spaces.
- Crawl spaces, attic, garage, other unheated spaces. The more insulation used, the better.

## DURING THE FREEZE TO DO'S:

- Consider using heat tape on your most vulnerable pipes. Must be plugged in to be effective.
- Keep your pool or spa pumps running while the temperature is freezing or below.
- Keep a small stream of water running in the pipes.
- A stream the width of a pencil should be sufficient. You may notice an increase in water and electricity usage.
- Keep garage door closed to help insulate exposed pipes in garage or pipes in garage walls.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around plumbing pipes.

# THAWING FROZEN PIPES TIPS:

- Thawing frozen pipes as soon as you are aware of them could potentially keep them from bursting your pipe.
- To thaw the pipe, you must know exactly where in the pipe the water is frozen so you can concentrate your efforts on the correct spot.
- Even if you thaw one section of pipe, there is the possibility that there are other sections of the pipe that are also frozen, and could be in a concealed or walled area.
- If you thaw a frozen pipe that has already burst, you will have an immediate water leak. Be prepared and have someone standing at the shut off valve so that the water can be turned off immediately if you have a water leak.

## THAWING FROZEN PIPES TO DO'S:

- Locate shut off valves so if the pipe has already split, when the pipe is thawed you can shut the water off before extreme water damage occurs.
- Open the closet faucet to the frozen section to allow for drainage as the pipe thaws.
- The water flow will help melt the ice.
- Apply hot air from a hair dryer, heating pad, electric blanket or electric heater to the section of pipe that is frozen until it is thawed and flowing.

## THAWING FROZEN PIPES DO NOT'S:

- DO NOT** use electrical devices near standing water.
- DO NOT** use a blow torch, a kerosene heater, a propane heater, a charcoal stove, or ANY open flame device to thaw frozen pipes!
- DO NOT** have open flames, they will present a serious fire hazard and release carbon monoxide into the air.
- DO NOT** use hot water directly on pipes to thaw.
- DO NOT** use antifreeze. Antifreeze is extremely toxic and is hazardous to you and your family, your pets, and the environment.

## PRE-TRAVELING TO DO'S:

- Keep the house temperature at a minimum of 55 degrees.
- Turn the water heater off.
- Do this **BEFORE** draining the water system. If gas, turn the gas off as well and switch the heat to pilot.
- Drain all the water from your plumbing system.
- Turn the incoming water off at the meter. Drain the system by turning on all the faucets in the home, the tubs, and draining the water heater.
- Open your kitchen and bathroom cabinets and closet doors to the home.
- Keep all faucets in the open position to all the pipes to expand as the temperatures drop.
- Remember to close all the faucets before turning the water back on.

## OTHER TIPS:

- Locate the shut off valves for the main, the water heater, sinks, commodes, and washing machine.
- If you do not have proper insulation for your pipes, you can use newspapers, towels, rags, blankets, or other similar materials. This is not as efficient but is better than unprotected pipes.