



When Quality & Integrity Count...

Hard Freeze Homeowner Checklist

Homeowners in the Houston Metropolitan area should give special attention to exposed water pipes during the winter months. Freezing pipes are a problem in warmer climates where they often run through un-insulated or under-insulated attics or crawl spaces. Although we only have a few cold snaps per season, it's still necessary to protect exposed water pipes. The "Texas Insurance Council" recommends taking action to protect your water supply system when temperatures drop into the 20's. Leaving pipes unprotected can cause them to burst, which can result in a tremendous amount of damage to the home and the contents inside.

You can drastically reduce your chance of property damage by preparing your water pipes before a hard freeze. The following suggestions can help you accomplish this task.

Actions to take to protect your property

- Insulate water pipes that are exposed in the crawl space, attic, garage and exterior of the house,
- Drain your yard sprinkler system backflow device (see website).
- Insulate your sprinkler system pipes and backflow prevention device.
- Disconnect all outside hoses from the faucet and insulate the faucet.
- Keep your pool or spa pumps running while temperatures are below freezing.
- Insulate pipes in unheated areas such as the crawl space, attic, and garage. Use insulating tape or molded pipe sleeve, wrap it over the entire length of exposed pipe. Cover all exposed valves, pipe fittings, etc. with insulating tape or fiberglass. (Check your hardware store for supplies).
- Let the water run if the temperature dips below freezing. (A stream slightly smaller than a pencil width should be sufficient). Faucets farthest from the street should be the ones left running. Using cold water will save on your gas or electric bill. (Your city of residency and/or Goodspeed Inspection Services, Inc. WILL NOT reimburse you for any water used as a preventative measure during freezing conditions.)
- If you do not have foam pipe insulation, you can use newspapers, towels, rags, blankets or any other similar materials to temporarily protect your pipes.

If you are leaving town, you should take the following precautions

- Option 1. Shut off and drain your water system if you are leaving home for several days. (Turn off the water heater before draining the system). Leaving your heater on a low setting while you are gone helps, but may not prevent freezing. Turn off the main shut off valve at the meter then go through the house and turn on all faucets, sinks, tubs, showers, etc., and flush the toilets. Turning on the faucets allows the system to expand if pipes do in fact freeze.
- Option 2. Open cupboard and closet doors. Leaving the cupboard and closet doors open when the temperature is below freezing, allows pipes behind the cupboard and closet doors to get more heat. Set the heating thermostat to no less than 55 deg. Have someone check on your property daily.

Take Action during Cold Weather

- Keep the garage door closed if there are water supply lines located inside.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around the plumbing.
- Keep the heating thermostat set at a consistent temperature both day and night.
- If going out of town during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home. Set the thermostat to a temperature no lower than 55 °F, and open cabinet doors where there is plumbing.

Thawing Frozen Pipes after the Storm

- Open all faucets throughout the house.
- If you suspect that the pipe is frozen; keep the faucet open. Water will begin to flow as you treat the frozen area, which will help to melt more ice in the pipe.
- Make sure you know where the main water valve is located outside of your home. The frozen pipe may already be broken, and it will leak when the water is thawed. If this is the case, you'll need to turn off the main water valve to your home until the leak is repaired.
- Apply heat to the frozen portion of the pipe. This can be accomplished by using the following sources of heat: a heating pad, electric hair dryer, a portable space heater, or wrapping pipes with towels soaked in hot water. Make sure that electrical cords do not come into contact with water. **Do not** attempt to use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or other open flame devices; they present a serious fire hazard as well as release lethal carbon monoxide fumes into the air.
- Apply heat until full water pressure is restored. Call a licensed plumber if you are unable to locate the frozen area, if the frozen area is not within reach, or if you can't get the pipe to thaw.
- Inspect all other faucets in your home to find out if additional pipes are frozen. If one pipe freezes, others may freeze also.

Miscellaneous

- Locate and know how to operate the main gas valve at the gas meter.
- Locate and know how to operate the main water shut-off valve at the house and at the street main water meter. You may need to shut off the water into the house if a pipe bursts.
- Locate and know how to operate the main electrical disconnect to shut off all the power to the house.
- Locate and know how to operate the gas shut-off valves at each gas appliance throughout the house.
- Locate and know how to operate the water shut-off valve at the water heater.
- Locate and change the batteries in your Carbon Monoxide detectors and Smoke detectors.

What NOT TO DO!

- DO NOT attempt to use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or other open flame devices; they present a serious fire hazard as well as release lethal carbon monoxide fumes into the air.
- DO NOT use a stove or oven as a heating source.
- DO NOT use antifreeze in toilets or pipes. Antifreeze is a toxic substance that can harm the environment or you and your pets.

WARNING!

If you are unsure of how to conduct freeze prevention, it is recommended that you contact a professional. Goodspeed Inspection Services, Inc. cannot be held responsible for any information contained in this informative document and for any actions that you do or do not take to protect your home

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Mr. Goodspeed has been in the construction inspection industry since 1987. He has conducted thousands of quality fee paid residential real estate structural/mechanical inspections & light industrial inspections in the Houston metropolitan area since 1996.

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