

Protect Your Home From Winter's Wrath

Tips to Keep Your Pipes from Freezing

When the temperature falls below 20 degrees and is accompanied by strong winter winds, the potential for pipes freezing dramatically increases. The result is often burst pipes and flooding.

"The winter months can be very damaging to your home if you do not plan ahead," says agent Eric Nier. "By keeping track of the weather forecast and taking some precautions, your house has a better chance of staying dry this winter."

The following tips from Eric Nier Insurance, the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency will help to keep your home dry this winter:

- Detach all gardening hoses and shut off water supply to outside faucets.
- Wrap pipes nearest exterior walls and in crawl spaces with pipe insulation or with heating tape.
- Caulk or weather seal windows to cut down on wind drafts.
- Tag the location of your main water valve and make sure you can easily turn it on and off.
- If you have a thermostat that uses a battery, be sure to replace it regularly.
- Shut off the water supply to your washing machine when not in use.
- If you plan to travel or be away from home for an extended period of time, ask a friend or neighbor to check your pipes and the temperature in your home.

During a deep freeze, consider the following steps:

- Try to keep the temperature in your home at 68 degrees.
- Keep cabinet doors open to allow heat from the home to circulate around the pipes.
- Check the water flow from all faucets before retiring for the evening and again in the morning. (Reduced water flow can be a sign of early freezing.)
- Allow your faucets to drip lukewarm water in order to minimize the chances of a pipe freeze.
- Remember, that a pipe doesn't necessarily burst the first time it freezes. Sometimes it takes several freezes and thaws before damage occurs. However, special care and forethought could help swing the odds in your favor.