NC STATE UNIVERSITY

PREVENTING FROZEN PIPES

When temperatures drop below freezing – especially a significant amount of time – the potential for frozen pipes increases dramatically.

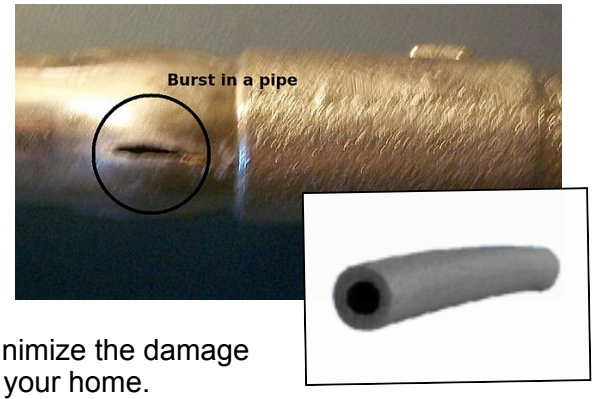
Before cold weather hits, take these precautionary steps:

- Know where and how to shut off your water from the main shut-off valve.
- Seal air leaks around pipes that allow cold air to seep in.
- Insulate pipes near outer walls, in crawl spaces or in attics.
- In exposed or problem areas, you may use heat tape or heat cables to prevent freezing. Make certain they are UL approved and that you follow manufacturers instructions.
- Disconnect garden hoses, shut off and drain water from pipes leading outside. Consider installing an insulated spigot cover.
- Turn your faucet on just enough to have constant dripping (for pipes that may be on exterior wall)
- Open cabinet doors to allow heat to circulate around pipes under a sink.
- Leave heat on and set no lower than 55 degrees.
- If you plan to be away from home, have someone check on your house daily.
- Close foundation vents if the temperature drops below freezing for a significant period of time. Re-open when weather warms.

If pipes freeze:

- Shut off water valves. Stopping the flow of water can minimize the damage to your home.
- Call a plumber to thaw your pipes. Thawing yourself can lead to greater damage and can be a hazard.
- If your pipes burst, call a plumber and your insurance agent.

Sealing air leaks and insulating pipes not only helps keep pipes from freezing, but can help save energy too.



Although attempting to thaw pipes yourself is NOT recommended, if you do try to thaw:

- Don't try to thaw the pipes with an open flame or torch.
- Don't use ungrounded electrical appliances outdoors, or near grounded water pipes.
- Be careful of the potential for electric shock in and around water.
- Never start a debris fire to warm pipes.
- When thawing pipes, always work from the open faucet toward the frozen area. This will keep steam from being trapped by ice and bursting the pipe.

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