

Take precautions to prevent pipes from freezing

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The best way to not worry about your pipes freezing in the winter is to prepare for the disaster, and then hope that it doesn't happen.

"Frozen pipes can be a costly problem if precautions are not taken," says Mary Kennedy Thompson, president of Mr. Rooter Corp. "Oftentimes, homeowners find themselves unprepared when winter weather hits."

Angie's List notes that a 1/4-inch crack in a pipe can spew up to 250 gallons of water in a day. But all it takes is a little bit of labor and a few supplies to skate through deep freezes without your home becoming a kiddie pool.

If your water pipes have already burst, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve in the house. Leave the water faucets turned on. Then call a plumber.

Here are some tips on avoiding frozen pipes from Mr. Rooter, the Cleveland Water Department and Angie's List.

- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat set no lower than 55 degrees.
- When weather is very cold, keep thermostats at the same temperature day and night. Lowered temperatures at night may contribute to colder attic temperatures and, thus, more vulnerable pipes.
- Know where the water cut-off valve is located in your home. Make sure that every responsible person in the home is aware of its location.
- Remove, drain and carefully store hoses used outdoors.

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- Seal all openings where cold air can get at unprotected water pipes.
- Pipes in attics and crawl spaces should be protected with fiberglass or foam sleeves. Heating cables or tapes are another option. Follow manufacturer's

directions closely.

- During freezing weather, leave cabinet doors open under kitchen or bathroom sinks (especially if they are located against an outside wall) to allow warmer room air to circulate around pipes. You can also place a small lamp with an incandescent bulb near the pipes. Be sure to remove anything flammable from the area to prevent fires.
- Let faucets drip slowly to keep water flowing through pipes that are vulnerable to

freezing. If the dripping stops, it may mean that ice is blocking the pipe. Keep the faucet open to assist in pressure relief.

- Exterior pipes and hose bibbs (outdoor faucets) should be drained or enclosed in 2-inch insulation sleeves.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.

If you turn on your faucets and nothing comes out, the water in your pipes is probably fro-

zen. You may be able to thaw a frozen pipe with the warm air from a hair dryer or by wrapping an electric heating pad around the pipe.

Make sure the faucet is open, and never stand in water while operating an electric appliance. Do not use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove or any open flame to thaw a pipe.

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