

COLD WEATHER TIPS

Not unexpectedly, we did receive a lot of calls over the Christmas holiday weekend from customers with frozen service line issues. There is still more cold weather to come, so here are some cold weather tips that may help you avoid having a frozen service:

INSIDE YOUR HOME OR GARAGE

► First things first, make sure everybody who lives in your home, including children old enough to understand instructions and operate the valve, know where the main emergency shutoff valve is. In the event that you have a pipe burst this winter, getting to that main shutoff valve quickly is crucial and can determine how much damage is actually done to your home. This valve is responsible for the flow of water in your home, once it's turned off, the water in your home will not run.

► During the day and night, open your kitchen and bathroom cabinets and pantry door (if applicable) to allow warmer air circulate around the plumbing. You may also consider leaving a small stream of water running when temperatures are below freezing, especially if you have experienced freezing pipes before. Remember, if you have small children

or pets make sure that all dangerous cleaning supplies or medications are placed somewhere safe and out of reach.

► If your bathroom pipes run along an outside exterior wall, try keeping the vanity door(s) open to allow heat inside. If you're anticipating a deep freeze, consider using a fan to help circulate the air near the pipes.

► Keep your garage door closed all the way if your water meter, water heater or softener, and associated plumbing are located in the garage. A bathroom or laundry room located above or next to a garage can be particularly vulnerable, so keep the garage door closed to maintain maximum heat. Properly installed insulated electrical heating tape is also effective at preventing freezing of metal pipes.

► Anywhere cold air blows on a pipe, it creates the potential for freezing. To make sure your pipes are well-insulated, close crawl space vents and stuff insulation over the openings. Ensure basement windows are intact and securely closed to prevent cold air from reaching plumbing in the basement. Even a tiny hole can let a lot of cold air blow in; make sure you fill in all the cracks.

► Finally, never turn off the heat when you leave home during the winter. Instead, set the temperature to at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit (or higher if you've had problems in the past or live in an area of extreme cold). If you have multiple heat zones, be sure to adjust all thermostats appropriately. Consult your HVAC service provider if you are unsure how to adjust multiple heat zones.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

► Disconnect and store garden hoses. If your home has a separate shut-off for external faucets, turn it off and drain the water from those faucets. There are covers available at hardware stores, usually made of Styrofoam, that can be installed over outside spigots for additional protection.

► Turn off and drain sprinkler systems. You may want to call in a professional company to blow out any leftover water in the underground lines. A broken sprinkler pipe can do damage to the delicate components that make up the entire system, increasing

the cost of repair. Frozen and broken pipes that are not properly winterized can result in high water bills when the lines thaw if the water supply is not shut off.

► Know where your main waterline shut-off is before problems arise. If your meter is not located inside your house it is outside in a meter pit, usually in the front yard by the property line. In an emergency you may have your plumber close the valve in the meter pit or you may call the utility for an emergency shut off. The Utility charges a fee for after-hours emergency shut offs.

If you need assistance locating your meter pit, please contact the Utility Business Office at (317) 542-0511. After turning the water off, turn on faucets to allow the water to drain and release the pressure in your pipes.

► Make sure that the lids are installed and secure on meter pits and curb stop boxes to prevent cold air from reaching plumbing in those structures. If yours are damaged or you cannot locate or secure them, please call the Business Office at (317) 542-0511 for assistance.

SIGNS YOU HAVE FROZEN PIPES

▶ You turn on the faucet, but nothing comes out. Look in the most likely places and use the techniques listed above to gently thaw the area. Whatever you do, do not use a blowtorch to warm up a frozen pipe. Many homes have been set on fire this way.

▶ No taps or other usages are open in the house, but you hear water running anyway. This could be a sign that you have a leak somewhere. You should turn off the water lines immediately and investigate.

▶ A water line is covered in frost or bulging



WHAT TO DO IF YOU IDENTIFY A FROZEN PIPE OR A PIPE BURSTS

▶ Shut off the water at the main shut off valve that is normally located at the meter (if the meter is located inside house). If the frozen pipe is slowing the flow of water, when the ice dam is removed, water will quickly flow out of the pipe. Main shut off valves are located in varying places including:

- ◆ Garage
- ◆ Basement
- ◆ Utility Closet
- ◆ Main entry for water line into the house (normally by hot water heater)

▶ Open the faucet of the frozen pipe to allow water to flow through and relieve the build-up of any pressure. Running water through the pipe will also help to melt any ice in the pipe.

▶ Apply heat to the section of frozen pipe. This can be done by wrapping a heating pad or insulated electrical heating tape around the pipe, heating it with a blow dryer, wrapping the pipes in towels soaked

in warm water or using a space heater to heat up the area where the pipes are located. Be careful with space heaters – Create a three-foot safety zone around any kind of space heater, taking special care to keep the space heater away from anything that burns, like furniture and draperies. Fuel burning space heaters can create deadly CO, so make sure to use a model approved for indoor use.

▶ Keep applying heat until the water pressure is restored and the water flows through freely.

▶ Never use an open flame like a propane torch.

▶ If a pipe is bulging or you can't find the location of the blockage, call a licensed plumber.



LAWRENCE UTILITIES RESPONSIBILITIES

Please note that Lawrence Utilities is not responsible for water or sanitary sewer service lines inside private mobile home parks, apartment complexes, condo developments and other developments with private water and sewer infrastructure (such as a large commercial complex).

If you have water service line issues and live or have a business in one of these types of developments, you need to contact your landlord or maintenance personnel.

If a water meter must be replaced due to freezing and breaking, the cost of the replacement meter will be placed on the customer's water bill as an additional charge.

As a reminder, persons needing assistance with energy bills may visit the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA) website at <https://ihcda.rhsconnect.com/index.html>.

On the page you can apply for assistance with heating bills. Also, for assistance with water or sanitary sewer bills you can access the LIHWAP program at: <https://www.in.gov/ihcda/homeowners-and-renters/low-income-household-water-assistance-program-lihwap/>.

For those who do not have access to the internet, you may also dial 2-1-1 for assistance in contacting these and other agencies who may provide assistance.