

Since the freezing cold temperatures are upon us..... Keeping pipes from freezing is essential in a home, vacant or occupied.

Why? Because when water freezes, it expands, which can cause pipes to burst—flooding your basement, ruining your drywall, and costing thousands of dollars in repairs. In fact, the Hartford Insurance Co. reports that the average claim for damage from a frozen pipe is a whopping \$18,000, according to its analysis of five years of winter claims data.

Here are the steps to take to keep pipes from freezing.

## Step 1: How to drain your pipes

First things first: Get the water in your pipes out! To do that, you'll want to tackle all the water lines leading to your garden hose, sprinkler, and pool. After you shut off the water valves, open the spigots to let any remaining water drip out.

## Step 2: Insulate exposed piping

Ideally, your water pipes should be kept in heated spaces only. Although this is the best-case scenario, everyone's home layout is different. Generally, you'll want to watch out for any pipes in unheated or uninsulated areas, like your attic, basement, or crawl space. That said, in warmer climates, a basement may stay well above freezing year round, so gauge the temperature—and act accordingly. Any piping located in areas that could go below freezing should be insulated with insulation sleeves or wrapping which you can at any local hardware store.

## Step 3: Open cabinet doors

Once you reach that time of year when freezing temperatures are the norm, even your indoor pipes may need some extra protection. And one easy way to do that is to open any bathroom or kitchen cabinet doors that house plumbing. No, it's not pretty leaving the space beneath your sink exposed, but the improved airflow keeps your pipes toastier than if they were shut.

## Step 4: Let it drip, drip, drip

Another pipe-saving tip: When temperatures drop to below freezing, let your faucets drip. Yes, this advice opposes almost everything else you know about water conservation, but it can save you big bucks on fixing that busted pipe. The Red Cross concurs that running water through the pipe—even at a trickle—helps prevent pipes from freezing. Letting cold water drip from the faucet helps relieve any pressure building from ice inside a pipe.

## Step 5: Shut off the water completely

During holiday travels or winter vacations, you'll want to take the extra measure to turn off your home's water completely. Unused water sitting in pipes is likely to freeze, meaning that you could come home to a busted pipe and total mess. In most homes, the water shut-off valve is located near where the water pipes make their way into your home—often the kitchen, basement or downstairs bathroom.

## Step 6: Never shut your heat off entirely

Even if a home is vacant the heat must be kept at a temperature between 40 and 50 degrees to avoid freezing air pockets.

If you are still unsure about what to do, please, contact a reliable plumber.