

Frozen Water Pipes & Meters

Cold weather and icy temperatures can cause frozen water pipes and water meters, possibly causing damage to your home. The City of Rockford offers the following information on how to prevent frozen pipes and what to do if pipes become frozen.

BE PREPARED:

Be sure all family members know how to shut off the water into your home. This is usually at the water meter. The water meter is a pear-shaped, bronze-colored, metal device located on the water line into the home. There is a valve on either side of the meter that can be used to shut off water. Be sure the shut-off valves are easy to operate, so that water can be turned off quickly in case of an emergency.

PREVENTION:

- Seal off any cracks that admit drafts to the basement, garage or crawl space containing water pipes or your water meter.
- Keep all doors and windows tightly shut at all times and make adequate heating available to these areas.
- Insulate all exposed water pipes, using pipe insulation or even several layers of newspaper.
- Protect your water meter from drafts by insulating it too.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PIPES BECOME FROZEN:

IF THERE IS NO WATER ANYWHERE IN YOUR HOUSE check for the following:

- Frozen Meter - Run your hands over the meter and see if it feels exceptionally cold or shows signs of leakage or damage. If so, call the Water Division and we will replace the meter, at your expense.
- Frozen Pipe either just before or just after the meter - Run your hands over the exposed pipes near your meter and see if any section feels exceptionally cold or shows signs of leakage or damage. If you can locate a cold spot, carefully apply heat from an electric heater, hair dryer or heating pad to the chilled area until the ice thaws. **DO NOT USE DIRECT FLAME OR BOILING WATER. THIS CAN BREAK THE PIPE!**
- Frozen Water Service Line - This is the pipe that carries water from the public main in the street to your house. If this line is frozen, it will have to be thawed electrically. Call the Water Division we will send an inspector to detect whether the frozen pipe is on your property or on the street side of the curb. If it is in the street, it is our responsibility to thaw it. If it is inside the curb line, it is your responsibility and requires the services of a plumber or welder at your expense. (Permanent prevention of this problem requires lowering of your service pipe below the frost line)

IF THERE IS WATER IN PART OF THE HOUSE, the frozen pipe is inside your home.

- If you can pinpoint the location you may be able to thaw it using an electric heater, hair dryer or heating pad on the nearest exposed portion of the pipe. For instance, for a bathroom or kitchen sink, apply heat to the pipes at the point where they emerge from the wall. Leave cabinet doors open under kitchen or bathroom sinks to let warm air in. If that doesn't work, call your plumber.

CAUTION: Please be careful when using electric appliances to thaw pipes. Be sure the thawing is done by an adult, being careful to avoid electric shock or fire hazards.

Please follow the steps outlined above to prevent frozen pipes or to locate and un-freeze pipes.