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Winterize Your Pipes to Prevent Water Damage

WINTER

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Record low temperatures have caused pipes to freeze in areas that typically have more mild winters.

Even the best forecasters cannot guarantee what's ahead each winter. "Snowbirds" are accustomed to preparing their homes in the north for freezing temperatures before leaving for warmer weather. But shifting weather patterns are now impacting homeowners who stay home

for the winter. There can be issues with freezing pipes, even though they are living in their home and running water daily.

Start by inspecting your home, looking for areas that could be vulnerable to cold air intrusion and freezing. Find out where your pipes run, paying special attention to areas along outside walls and in crawl spaces. Know where your shutoff valves are located. Identify and label your main water shutoff in case a pipe freezes and you need to shut off your water supply quickly to avoid water damage. For an extra layer of protection, consider adding an [automatic water shut-off device](#) to your home!

Winterize Your Pipes

If you're staying in your home and not traveling south for the winter:

- Be sure all plumbing is unclogged and running well before freezing weather hits.
- In rooms that have pipes on outside walls, let the sink drip when it's below 20 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent freezing.
- Insulate floors over crawl spaces or unfinished basements.
- Add insulation in unfinished attics.
- Use fiberglass or foam pipe wrap on pipes in the garage or basement to prevent freezing.
- The water main to the street should be buried below the frost line. If you know yours is not, keep at least three faucets dripping when temperatures drop below 20 degrees F.

When Leaving Town

Unoccupied buildings during cold spells present the biggest threat for frozen pipes. If you're out of town for the winter or over a cold weekend:

- Add a [low temperature sensor](#) to your central station or monitored alarm system. These sensors alert you to dramatically low temperatures in the home caused by furnace and heating source malfunctions.
- Keep the heat set at a minimum of 55 degrees F.
- If possible, drain all water from your pipes prior to leaving.

- Many property management companies can professionally winterize your home before you leave for the sunny south!

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