

COLD WEATHER HOME WATER ISSUES

Extremely cold weather is approaching. There are measures that home owners/renters can take to minimize the possibility of water pipes becoming frozen.

- Close foundation vents under the house. If vents won't close, place insulation or other material in them. Even newspaper wadded up and stuffed in the opening will prevent cold air from entering the crawl space.
- For mobile homes, inspect the underpinning and skirt and seal any openings.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water lines or water heaters in the garage
- If problems with frozen pipes have occurred in the past, leave faucets running, so that the stream of water is about the size of the barrel of a Q-tip. For single-lever faucets, set so that both hot and cold water is dripping. You will pay for using that water; however, the cost of that water is very small compared to the cost and inconvenience of having a plumber thaw and then repair water lines, as well as repairing damage to the home done by flooding due to a broken line.
- For outside faucets, most new homes will have frost-free spigots, so not much will need to be done. If you don't know if you have frost-free spigots, they can be covered with foam insulated covers that can be obtained from a hardware store. Remove hoses and drain them.
- Water lines in outside walls are prone to freezing. If the interior of the wall is inside a cabinet, open the door(s) to the cabinet, so room heat will keep the wall and the pipe(s) somewhat warmer. Even that may not be enough to keep wall pipes from freezing. If you are not sure, leave a faucet running. If there are harmful cleaners and chemicals in the cabinet, move them so that they are not within reach of children.
- For water meters that are prone to freezing, put a bale of hay over the meter box. If you don't have access to a bale of hay, use a shovel and pile snow on top of the meter box. Although the temperature of the snow is below freezing, it will actually act as an insulating blanket when the air temperature is near or below zero.
- If you have a burst pipe and water is flooding your house, most houses have a shut-off valve under the house (maybe in the garage) that can be used to shut off the water. If you don't know where the shut-off valve is located or if your house doesn't have a shut-off valve, call the Springfield Water/Wastewater Department (SWWD) at 615-382-1600 and a SWWD person will be glad to shut off the water at the meter.
- Most water heaters have a valve located near the connection of the cold water line to the heater; however, this valve will usually only cut off the hot water line. If water is cut off to the house, be sure to turn off the electric power to the water heater to prevent burning out the element(s); if the water heater is powered by gas, turn the gas control valve to "PILOT".
- Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame.

- Remember: The Springfield Water/ Wastewater Department is responsible up to and through the water meter box. The home owner is responsible for the water line from the meter box all the way through the residence. If you have a leak on the home-side of the meter box, do not call the Springfield Water/Wastewater Department to fix the leak. The SWWD will only shut off the valve in the water meter box. You must contact a plumber to repair a leak on the home-side of the water meter box.
- If you call the SWWD office at 615-382-1600 after normal working hours, you will get a recording that will prompt you to leave a message with a call center. The call center is continuously operated and the operator will ask some questions regarding the issue. The call center operator will contact an SWWD on-call person who will respond to emergency requests.