

Service Area 3 FAQs

Frozen pipes

What do I do if my pipes are frozen?

- Locate the main water shut off to the house and shut off the water.
- Turn on faucets. Allow a slight but steady stream of water to run through. Once thawed this will relieve pressure.
- Open your cabinets. Allows warm air to circulate.
- Increase the temperature in your home. Warms pipes within the walls.
- Apply heat to your pipes slowly. Use a hair dryer or space heater to gently warm frozen pipes. Never use an open flame to thaw pipes.
- Check for leaks. Once the pipes thaw, carefully turn the water back on slowly and check for leaks around joints and connections.
- **Call a plumber if necessary.** If you cannot locate the frozen section, access the pipes or suspect a burst pipe, contact a licensed plumber immediately. **Please don't call the Service Area for a frozen pipe, the homeowner is responsible for the water from the meter to their home or anything within their home.**

Important points to remember:

Preventing frozen pipes is, of course, the best defense against ice blockages. Take the following steps:

- Winterize your outdoor pipes. A burst pipe along the outside of a building can still cause indoor damage.
 - Insulate all pipes in cold or exposed areas. Preparing your pipes for winter dramatically reduces the risk of freezing.
 - Seal air leaks around windows, doors, dryer vents, pipes, and electrical outlets.
 - Keep the thermostat to at least 55°F day and night.
 - Open kitchen and cabinet bathrooms to circulate warm air around pipes.
 - Slightly open all faucets to a slow drip to maintain some water flow through the pipes. Doing so reduces the risk of ice blockages. Make sure sink drains are open to allow the water to drain away.
 - Disconnect all garden hoses and irrigation systems and drain them.
 - If your home is equipped with indoor shutoff valves connected to outdoor faucets, close the indoor valves, then open the outdoor faucets to drain all water from the pipes. Leave the outdoor faucets open then cover with an insulation kit.
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- **Preventative measures:** During cold weather, keep cabinet doors under sinks open to allow warm air to circulate around pipes.
 - **Identify vulnerable areas:** Pipes located along exterior walls are more likely to freeze.

- **Monitor the situation:** If you are experiencing extreme cold, regularly check your pipes for signs of freezing.

Will frozen pipes thaw out on their own?

Frozen pipes thaw when the temperature rises, but this comes with significant risks. Leaving frozen pipes to thaw by themselves increases the likelihood of burst pipes and serious property damage. Even if the pipe does not burst, waiting for the ice blockage to thaw naturally can weaken pipe materials increasing the risk of future leaks or bursts.

How long does it take pipes to freeze?

Pipes can freeze in as little as six to eight hours, depending on the following factors:

- Insulated pipes take longer to freeze
- Pipes in unheated or outdoor locations have a greater risk of freezing and bursting.
- The speed with which the temperature drops impacts how long it takes pipes to freeze.
- Wind chill can hasten the freezing process in exposed outdoor pipes.

What temperature would pipes freeze at?

Uninsulated pipes can technically freeze at 32°F, but may not experience a hard freeze until temperatures drop below 21°F. Insulated pipes are less likely to freeze and burst but can freeze if temperatures drop below 20°F.