

Preventing Damage to Household Plumbing from Freezing Temperatures

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How cold does it have to be for the water in my household pipes outside to freeze?

A: Typically, your home's pipes begin to freeze when the outside temperature is at least 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Q: What is the best way to prevent pipes from freezing?

A: Pipe insulation, made of foam or rubber, can insulate your pipes from freezing temperatures. Polyethylene Foam and rubber pipe insulation should be available at your local do it yourself stores like Home Depot or Lowes. If necessary, use a large towel and wrap the pipe so it is completely covered.

Q: Are there other ways to keep the water in your pipes from freezing?

A: If the temperatures are not too extreme, you can allow the cold water from your sinks to trickle so the water entering and moving through the house is not allowed to stop. But only allow a very slow drip so as to not waste water.

Q: Do I have to insulate the box where the water meter is located?

A: No, the meter box and the meter are the property of the city of Phoenix, and because they are covered, they will not freeze.

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Q: Will the water in my irrigation system piping, made of PVC, Poly or Vinyl, freeze?

A: Yes, water can freeze in irrigation pipe, and depending upon the pipe type, they can break as well. The best prevention is to sufficiently bury irrigation system piping or wrap with insulation.

Q Should I make sure the irrigation system valves are covered as well, or inside a protective box?

A: Yes, all irrigation and household plumbing outside your home should be insulated.

Q: How do I insulate the backflow preventer attached to my water service at the house?

A: You can insulate it with rubber or foam insulation, or for a short-term solution, you can cover it with a thick blanket and secure it.

Q: Do I have to insulate my garden hose that is hooked up to an outdoor hose bib?

A: You can remove, drain, and store your garden hose in a warmer environment, like your garage, until the weather warms up again.

Q: Will the water pipes in my garage, that are hooked up to my water heater, freeze?

A: With the exception of the garage door, most of the other sides of a garage are insulated, and thus your pipes should be protected. However, be sure that your garage door is closed to prevent the colder air from entering.

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Q: What if I am unsure if there is sufficient insulation in the walls surrounding the water pipes in my home.

A: You can open cabinet doors and let the warmer air inside the house circulate under sinks and other locations where pipes are so they stay above the freezing temperatures just outside your home.

Q: What do I do if I have a water pipe burst or break as a result of freezing temperatures?

A: Turn off your water service using the valve near the location where it enters your home. If the valve does not work or is broken, contact the city to have the service turned off at the meter. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TURN OFF THE WATER AT THE METER YOURSELF.** Call the city at 602-261-8000 if you have an emergency water line issue.