

Prevent pipes from freezing

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Now that winter is upon us, the Tinley Park Public Works Department would like to offer a few tips to help residents keep their pipes from freezing. The three central causes of frozen pipes are quick drops in temperature, poor insulation and thermostats set too low. You can prepare your home during the warmer months by keeping the following things in mind:

- Before winter hits, disconnect garden hoses and, if possible, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house.
- A trickle of hot and cold water might be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.
- Keep your thermostat set at the same temperature during both day and night. You might be in the habit of turning down the heat when you're asleep, but drops in the temperature - more common overnight - could freeze your pipes.
- Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

What if your pipes still freeze, despite your best preventive measures? First step: Don't panic. Just because they're frozen doesn't mean they've already burst. Here's what you can do:

- If you turn on your faucets and nothing comes out, leave the faucets turned on and call a plumber.
- Do not use electrical appliances in areas of standing water. You could be electrocuted.
- Never try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame because it could cause a fire. Water damage is preferable to burning down your house!

- You may be able to thaw a frozen pipe using a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe.
- If your water pipes have already burst, turn off the water at the main shutoff valve in the house; leave the water faucets turned on. Make sure everyone in your family knows where the water shutoff valve is and how to open and close it.