



Emergencies happen. Severe weather may damage our homes, and some problems are more critical than others. Water emergencies should be dealt with immediately, whether the water is coming in from outside, or there's a plumbing leak inside your home. Why?

Water or high levels of moisture may continue causing damage, often hidden damage, which increases the risk of mold along with higher repair costs. By the time you see a small stain on your ceiling, the water leak that probably caused it may be days or weeks old with more damage hidden between the ceiling and the walls or floors above. A small problem, might be small ... or it might be a lot bigger once you start repairs and are able to see what's hidden inside the ceiling/walls.

## Learn Where Water Shutoff Valves Are

You might not know you can shut off the water supply inside your home or the main supply where it enters the house. Your plumbing system starts with a shutoff valve at the point where the water enters the house. Many fixtures like toilets, have a shutoff valve that can be used to stop the flow of water from the main system, to a single fixture. When you buy a home, you should **learn where your shutoff valves are located** and practice opening and closing them at least once. This way you'll feel prepared for any emergency that requires shutting off the water.

**Turn Handle Clockwise to Shut Water Supply Off**



When you know where the water is leaking, identify the shutoff valve that will stop the flow of water and turn it off. Most of us aren't plumbing experts, so you might not figure out where the water is coming from, or which shutoff valve needs to be shut off. What's important is to stop the leak, so go ahead and **shutoff the main water supply** (shown at left) until you, a plumber or handyman can find and repair the source of the problem.

The main shutoff valve is most often a lever which may be difficult to turn by hand. You can use a pair of slip-joint pliers to grip and turn the handle, rotating it **CLOCKWISE** until it stops. When opening or closing the valve, it must be completely open or completely closed (same for all valves).

Note: If your home has an interior sprinkler system, you should also learn how to shut this system off. In multi-unit buildings, i.e. condominiums, the water supply may be shared and located in another unit. If the owner of that unit isn't available, either an onsite manager or the fire department should be prepared to shut the water off. Here are the places where you should find shutoff valves. In cold climates, it is becoming more common to add shutoff valves near the washing machine, as the plumbing when it's near unheated space, can freeze.

### **Try Shutting Off Single Fixture First**

Here are all the places where you can shut the water off. It's preferable to leave the main water supply on and only shut off the area where there is a problem.



- **Near the water meter (main shutoff)**, where the water enters your home. In warm weather climates, this valve may be found outside but always inside in cold climates.
- **Under each sink** there should be two (2) shutoff valves, one each for cold and hot water supply lines. After the kitchen and bathrooms, don't forget about utility and/or bar sinks.
- The water supply line to the **dishwasher** is typically connected to the water line under the sink, and can be shut off by turning off the water supply to the sink.
- Each **toilet has a shutoff valve (shown here)** behind the toilet, most often on the left side.
- The **washing machine** should have valves behind it that are easy to access, and turn off.
- There is a shutoff valve on the cold water pipe coming into the top of your **hot water heater**.
- The **refrigerator ice maker** may be controlled by the kitchen sink or other water supply valve. It may also have its' own small shutoff valve.
- **Only bathtubs and showers do not have special shutoff valves** because their regular on and off controls already provide that function.
- There should be shutoff valves for **exterior plumbing** including faucets and a sprinkler system.