

Protect Water Pipes from Freezing Temperatures

Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities

www.slch20.com

With the onset of winter weather, colder temperatures can wreak havoc on unprepared and unprotected pipes. Icy winds and dropping temperatures can cause a lot of damage to your home by freezing the water pipes, leaving you without flowing water or with burst water pipes. Before you have an emergency, there are precautions you can take now to help avoid or minimize problems later.

Before Freezing Weather:

- Disconnect and drain hoses from outside faucets;
- Turn off and drain sprinkler systems and backflow devices,
- Wrap outside faucets and backflow devices with insulating material;
- Cover foundation vents inside with foam blocks, thickly folded newspapers, or cardboard;
- Insulate pipes in unheated areas, such as the garage, attic, basement, or crawl spaces; and
- Show household members how to turn off the water in case of an emergency.

During Freezing Weather:

- Open cupboard doors under sinks, especially where plumbing is in an exterior wall, to let interior heat warm the pipes;
- Temporarily, keep a steady, but slow drip of cold water at an inside faucet farthest from the meter to keep water moving and making it less likely to freeze;
- If you are away more than a day, shutting off your water and leaving the thermostat at 55 degrees can reduce the chance of broken pipes;
- For extended winter absences, consider contacting Public Utilities to have your water shut off at the meter; and
- Be a good neighbor and notify Public Utilities if you suspect or notice a leak at a vacant home or building.

If Your Pipes Freeze:

- Never thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame; a hair dryer or the exhaust from a vacuum cleaner safer alternatives;
- If the lines are frozen, assume they may be broken or split; purchase leak clamps at a hardware or plumbing store and be prepared to turn your water off when the pipes thaw;
- If there is no water to your home, the problem may be in the street; call Public Utilities' emergency number (801-483-6700);
- If your pipes break, shut off the water at the shut-off valve and turn off the circuit breaker or the gas to the water heater.

If a water pipe broke in your home, could you find the shut-off valve? Know where it's located and that it functions properly before an emergency. Look for the shut-off valve:

- *In the basement or crawl space near where the water lines enter the house;*
- *In the garage where the water line enters the wall or the ceiling;*
- *Outside near the foundation, often protected by a concrete ring or clay pipe.*

Water Mainline Breaks

Although water mainline breaks are infrequent, they do occur from time to time. When a mainline break happens, we work quickly to repair the leak. Mainline breaks may cause interruptions of your water service. We work hard to minimize the occurrence and duration of these interruptions. Sometimes, though, they cannot be prevented. Should an interruption in service occur, there are several things you can do to help us and yourself through the event. First, should you find you have no water service, please call Public Utilities Emergency Dispatch at 801-483-6700. Turn off all of your faucets, and try to avoid the area where the repairs are being conducted. It is a good idea to keep a supply of water available should you be without service, but do not store water in used containers unless they have been sterilized.

Once the leak has been repaired, there may be air and sediment in the water lines. This may cause discoloration, but is not unsafe. To clear the line, run the water in your bathtub and showers for five (5) minutes, until the sediment has passed and the water is clear. Afterwards, run each faucet for about a minute. You might also want to run water through your washing machine to make certain that no sediment is in that line and discolors clothing.