Backflow Management Inc.

Steps to Winterize Your Piping System

Below are a few simple steps that can be taken in order to protect water pipes from freezing during the winter season.

1. Know where the water shutoff valve is in case of a frozen or broken pipe.

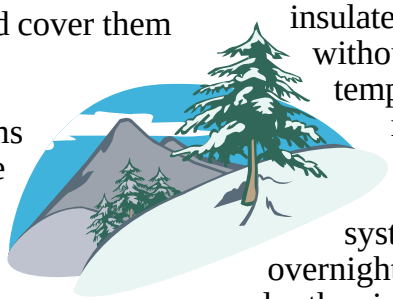
2. Be extremely careful in thawing frozen pipes. Many house fires are caused by this procedure. Use rags soaked in hot water and applied to the pipes rather than an open flame.

3. Close foundation vents with insulation material.

4. During a very cold period, use a fan to circulate air throughout the crawl space if possible.

5. Many homes now have an attachment on their outside hose bibs called a "hose bib vacuum breaker" (HBVB). The HBVB is a one-way valve that prevents backflow if a water pressure drop occurs while using a hose. The HBVB can hold water in the hose bib and freeze if not drained. Many HBVBs have a ring that can be pushed up to allow draining. Also be sure to close the valves to outside faucets if possible, and cover them with an insulated cover.

6. In-ground sprinkler systems should be drained and the backflow prevention assembly or device drained and insulated. To drain the system, make sure it is shut off, then open any drain valves, if available. If assistance is needed with this, contact a licensed landscape contractor.



7. If the backflow prevention assembly on the in-ground sprinkler or swimming pool has ball valves for shutoff valves, the system should be turned off upstream and the ball valve handle turned to a 45 degree angle so that it is partially open. This prevents the moisture around the ball valve seat from freezing and expanding which damages the valve.

8. With outside hose bibs shut off, drained and insulated, and pipes under the home insulated, most winters can be survived without problems. However, if the temperature dips below freezing for more than a day, it may be wise to leave a cold water faucet (at the farthest point in your system) running a small stream overnight. Also, open the cabinet doors under the sinks to allow room temperature in.

Commonly Asked Questions

It's not uncommon these days to pick up a newspaper and read an article on the quality of the drinking water. These articles leave many unanswered questions and suspicions about the community's water. Following are the answers to some commonly asked questions.

Is my drinking water safe?
For the most part, yes. Water suppliers are required to test the water monthly for coliform bacteria. The suppliers must also test frequently for various other chemicals, metals, pesticides, herbicides, and minerals. If any of the parameters exceed the level set by the EPA, the district is required to notify water users.

Is it safe to have chlorine in drinking water?
To date, all studies have indicated that chlorine, below the level set by the EPA, is safe to drink.

Is it safe to add fluoride to drinking water?
Yes. A report by the national Academy of Sciences indicated that fluoride, at the allowable levels in drinking water, is not a health risk. Fluoride occurs naturally in many drinking water sources and is added in others. A water district is required to monitor for the correct amount and remove excess, if necessary.

If a "boil-water" notice is received from a water district, what does it mean about water quality?
A boil-water notice is given when certain coliforms have been detected and confirmed in the water supply, indicating the possible presence of germs. Boiling the water kills the germs. The district will inform everyone using its water to boil it until further notice.

Why is drinking water cloudy when it first comes out of the faucet, and then clears up?
The water is cloudy because of tiny air bubbles. When these air bubbles rise to the top, they disappear and leave the water looking clean.

Can everyone help prevent contamination of our water supply?

Yes! Dispose of household chemicals properly. This includes paint, solvents, cleaning products, polishes, lubricants, etc. Try to use environmentally safe products and purchase only what is needed to minimize waste. Even when products go down the drain to waste-water treatment, or through a septic tank drain field, they eventually may reach a drinking water source.

Some basic tips to remember in terms of drinking water:

- Do not drink first draw. Water standing in the pipes for long periods of time can pick up contaminants from the pipes. Let the water run 30 to 60 seconds before drinking.

- Do not use hot water from the tap for cooking. Hot water tanks can leach metals into the water. Heat cool water on the stove.

- Pay attention to lead content in faucets and other plumbing fixtures when purchasing. Do not buy lead solder.

- Guard against cross connections. A garden hose is a direct connection to the drinking water in the home. Don't attach chemical sprayers or leave a garden hose submerged in a swimming pool.

- Be an informed consumer. Use environmentally safe products whenever possible.