

Some ways to avoid frozen pipes.

Adjust the thermostat. Keeping your thermostat set at the same temperature during both day and night also reduces the risk of frozen pipes. During extreme cold, this also helps reduce the strain on the furnace. If you plan to be away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55° F.

Open cabinet doors. This allows heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls. (If you have small children, be sure to remove any harmful cleaners and household chemicals.)

Let water drip. A trickle of hot and cold water might be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight when temperatures are cold, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.

Insulate pipes. Add insulation to attics, basements, and crawl spaces. Exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing. Remember, the more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be. Insulation will maintain higher temperatures in those areas.

Seal leaks. Locate and thoroughly seal leaks that allow cold air inside. Look for air leaks around windows, doors, electrical wiring, dryer vents, pipes, and openings at sill plates, where the house rests on its foundation. Use caulk or insulation to keep the cold out.

Use heat tape or heat cables. Heat tape or thermostatically controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure to use products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturer's installation and operation instructions.

Secure outdoor hoses, valves, and faucets. 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.

Keep garage doors closed. Don't leave garage doors open for extended periods of time, especially if there are water supply lines in the garage.