

FREEZING PIPES

Frozen Pipes: Preparation is the Key to Prevention

(Sources: K&S Plumbing Co., Lowes, Philadelphia Insurance, and Safewise)

Winter is here. For most of the country, that means freezing temperatures, snow, ice, and all the property risks that come with them. Below freezing temperatures create a wide assortment of real estate hazards. If not properly handled cold weather can cause major long-term property damage. The most significant and often occurring vulnerability associated with extreme cold is frozen pipes and vital safety systems. Frozen plumbing including fire protection systems can be extremely costly for property owners. In the worst-case scenario, sprinkler pipes can burst resulting in substantial damage to buildings, furnishings, and electrical equipment.

Why Do Pipes Freeze

Your pipes usually have a small amount of water in them, even when the taps aren't turned on. This water can freeze when the temperature drops. Frozen pipes can leave you without running water. And they're at risk of bursting and flooding your facility.

10 Tips to Prevent Frozen Pipes

Frozen piping is not something that anyone wants to occur in their building. However, without taking preventative action in extremely cold conditions, frozen pipes are a common occurrence. Therefore, use these ten commercial property management tips to prevent frozen water pipes, and keep your property and its occupants safe this winter.

1. **Insulate Exterior Piping:** The most vulnerable pipes in a commercial building run along the building's exterior. Inspect the building and find exterior piping or any interior piping unheated spaces. Thoroughly wrap pipes with a sleeve or electrical heat tape.
2. **Inspect Your Property on a Regular Basis:** Your maintenance staff should look for any sign of small leaks or fatigue before and during periods of below freezing temperatures. Early discovery of leaks. Fatigue or freezing pipes can allow for preventative action and save thousands of dollars in damage.
3. **Relieve Pressure on the Pipes:** In extreme cold a property owner can relieve pressure on their pipes by running water at a slow drip to prevent a catastrophic failure.
4. **Prevent Drafts near Pipes:** Feel for drafts near any of the pipes, especially if your building has an attic or basement. If you feel a draft, you'll need to caulk any cracks that could be letting in the cold air from outside. Keep in mind that cracks and holes on the outside of your commercial building can also let in drafts. It'll be much easier keeping plumbing warm when it isn't exposed to cold air seeping in from outside.
5. **Check Shutoff Valves and Levers:** In case of a burst pipe it's key that you act quickly to prevent further damage. Correspondingly, check all shut--off valves and, levers to make sure they are in pristine working order.
6. **Keep Doors Inside the Building Open:** It's hard for your building's heating system to work efficiently when rooms are closed off. For this reason, keep the interior doors open so that heat can travel throughout your building.
7. **Turn up the Thermostat:** It is important to understand the cost of low utility expenditures in extreme cold is vastly of set by the cost of frozen piping. As a result, it is important to maintain a well heated property during periods of extreme cold (at least 50 Degrees Fahrenheit).

8. **Open the doors to kitchen and bathroom cabinets under your sinks:** So, heat will help warm the pipes.
9. **Remove hoses from outside faucets:** The faucets can't drain properly with a hose attached and will freeze and break if left attached.
10. **If you have a sprinkler system:** Drain all outdoor pipes and turn off the water supply to the system.

What to Do if a Pipe Freezes

- To prevent a frozen pipe from bursting, open the faucet supplies with water. Then add heat to the area where the pipe is located.
- Turn off the water supply to that line.
- If the pipe does burst, immediately turn off the water to your home.
- Know where your main water emergency shut-off valve is located.

Also Consider

- Pipes that froze and/or cracked will begin to thaw and could burst. Without proper attention, damaged and melted pipes could channel unwanted water into your home. If you suspect you have a frozen pipe, call a plumber immediately or follow these tips to help thaw the pipe on your own:
- Pipes that are most likely to freeze are those located in exterior walls or where your water enters your home through its foundation.
- Turn the faucet(s) on halfway to begin. As you treat the frozen pipe, the ice will begin to melt, and you will notice water flowing more freely from the faucet. Once water is flowing, open the faucet all the way. This steady approach will help to prevent water from gushing.
- Apply heat to the frozen section of the pipe by wrapping it with a heating pad, or by using a hair dryer or portable space heater on it. Apply the heat until full water pressure is restored. (Never leave portable heating sources unattended.)
- If you are unable to locate the frozen area of the pipe, if the frozen area is not accessible, or if you cannot thaw the pipe, call a licensed plumber immediately.
- Check all other faucets in to identify others that may have frozen. If one pipe freezes, it's likely others may have as well.

In the Event of a Pipe Burst

While you can take all the above steps to prevent pipe bursts, occasionally being prepared is not enough. In the case of a burst pipe the key is to act quickly to minimize damage. First, turn off the main water supply. If that is not possible, contact the plumber immediately. Second, if you notice water seeping in from the ceiling or walls, shut down the power supply at the meter box and call an electrician immediately. Third, further mitigate damage by covering any documents in electronics prevent additional loss. Moreover, open doors and windows in all wet areas to allow for faster drying. Finally, contact your insurance agent and an emergency cleanup service immediately! The sooner you act the quicker and less costly the repair will be.

Unfortunately, pipes freeze all the time, but they don't have to. If you use these tips, we hope you'll never have to file a water damage or freezing claim.



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