

Winterizing Your Home To Prevent Water Line Breaks

It is the season for the cold temperatures to hit Georgia. In Metro Atlanta for January, the average high temperature is 53 °F and low is 32 °F. Recently, the extreme low temperatures recorded have ranged from 6 °F to 22 °F. Here are a few tips to help protect your water pipes from freezing and bursting. One of the most important tips which will save on aggravation and money is to **know where your water shut-off valves are located and how to turn the water off at your meter box in case of a plumbing break**. The longer water is spraying into unwanted places on your property, the more money it will cost. Water shut-off valves are typically located behind sinks, toilets, hot water heaters, etc.

Turn The Water Off At Your Meter

- 1) Locate your meter box, typically near the sidewalk/curb
- 2) Remove Cover
- 3) Directly in front of the meter is a valve
- 4) Using a crescent wrench, turn the valve perpendicular to the water line – which can be accomplished by a quarter turn clockwise. Be aware that you may have two water meters, one for the home and the other for outside irrigation.

Inside The House

- Set thermostat to at least 55 °F when you leave your house
- Protect exposed pipes with insulation
- Open cabinet doors to expose pipes to warmer room temperatures
- If you have pipes vulnerable to freezing, allow a small trickle of water to run to keep the pipes from freezing. The cost of the extra water is low compared to the cost to repair a broken pipe.
- Eliminate sources of cold air near water lines – provide a heat source for unheated garages if water lines/water heater is located within.

Outside The House

- Keep the lid to the water meter closed tightly – clear debris – if the meter box is flush to the ground and the cover is on it is less likely to freeze up
- Disconnect garden hoses from outside water faucets
- Protect freeze-prone faucets with insulating covers
- Drain lawn irrigation system of all water including the backflow device
- Remove, drain or protect exterior pumps on pools, saunas and fountains.

Have an emergency plan for critical water needs such as pets, livestock, cooking, drinking, handwashing and toilet flushing. Storing water in containers (*buckets, gallon jugs, etc.*) is a good practice to plan for emergency situations.

Unprotected pipes are susceptible to cold temperatures because water expands when it goes from a liquid to a solid. A gallon of water will expand to a volume 9% greater than the original gallon. Ice blockage becomes more likely when outside temperatures drop below freezing. A cold wind reaching unprotected pipes quickly removes heat and increases chance of ice formation. Water pressure that builds between the ice blockage and a closed faucet can burst a pipe. The three most common causes of frozen pipes are quick drop in temperature, poor insulation and thermostats set too low.

If a leak occurs, check with CCWSA about the leak adjustment policy in place for customers.