

How To Thaw a Frozen Water Pipe

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If temperatures drop to freezing or below, water pipes can freeze, expand, and burst, causing flooding from a broken pipe in your home when the frozen pipe begins to thaw. It can create a huge cleanup problem, damage or destroy furniture and other personal property, undermine the support structure of the home, and cause mold to spread throughout the affected area of the home. Here's information on how to thaw a frozen pipe before it causes major water damage.

How Can I Tell That a Pipe is Frozen?

If you know it is frozen, you might be able to thaw a frozen pipe before any damage occurs. For example, if no water comes out when you turn on a faucet, a toilet does not refill the tank after flushing it, a pipe is bulging or split, or there is frost covering a section of a pipe.

Either call a plumber to handle the situation safely and possibly avoid extensive water damage, or to thaw a frozen pipe yourself, follow these 4 simple steps:

Locate the frozen pipe.

Turn on each faucet to see if one is not flowing with water or if there is too little flow. If the water in all the pipes is flowing slowly, the frozen spot may be on the main water supply line, usually located in the basement or the home's crawl space, on the street side.

Turn off the water and clean up the mess.

Before thawing a frozen pipe, turn off the main water supply line. Turn on all the water faucets in the home to drain all remaining water from the pipes. Flush your toilets to drain them too. Use a mop and some towels to clean up the mess. For more extensive flooding, get professional water cleanup to avoid serious water damage.

Heat to Thaw the Frozen Pipe.

Use a hair dryer or a heat lamp, or just pour hot water on a towel over the frozen area. Start by heating near the outer end of the frozen area of the pipe nearest to the bathroom or kitchen to allow steam from the heating to escape. Check along the frozen pipe until the entire length of it is thawed.

Turn the Water Back on at the Main Valve.

After the freeze is over, the cleanup is done, and the pipe repair is complete, turn the main water supply valve partially back on. If the pipe leaks, contact a plumber and clean up the mess. If it's not leaking, you can turn on the water and just turn off all faucets.

What to Do in Other Pipe Leak Situations

These are circumstances that require special handling to remedy a frozen pipe without causing potentially significant damage:

- How to thaw a frozen main water line: If the frozen part of the pipe is on the exterior side of the main valve, call the public water company for repair.
- How to thaw a frozen outside drain pipe: The instructions for thawing the pipe are the same, but you must wait until the outside temperatures are above freezing.
- How to thaw a frozen drain pipe: Call a licensed plumber.
- How to thaw frozen pipes in a wall: Even if there is wet drywall, that may not be the origin of the leak, so you should call a plumber for help finding the leak.
- How to thaw a frozen pipe underground: Even if there's a wet area, it may be unclear where the leak originates, so contact a professional plumber.

To Prevent Future Frozen Pipes

Insulate the pipes in your house, especially those that are located in the coldest areas, like the basement, crawl space, or garage. Consider wrapping the pipes with heat tape, (an electrically heated pipe insulation strip) to keep pipes from freezing. Or, at least, when you know temperatures will be below freezing, open cabinets to expose pipes to warm indoor air. Or, turn on all faucets to keep water trickling through the pipes to prevent pipe freezing and potential property damage and mold growth.

If a Broken Pipe Floods Your Home – Utah Flood Cleanup

Finding a frozen pipe and calling for a repair is the easiest way to deal with this wintertime problem. But, if a pipe breaks and causes a flood in your home while you are away, you will need Utah Flood Cleanup. We are your local flood cleanup and damage

restoration service. We will dry your home's structure completely, return your property to pre-flood condition, and treat the home to help prevent mold growth.

If you have a broken water pipe in your home, call Utah Flood Cleanup at (801) 416-2666, or contact us here on our website to schedule an inspection.
