

AVOID THE SURPRISE!

A MESSAGE FROM THE CITY OF GENEVA WATER DEPARTMENT

Don't let cold weather catch you unprepared. Every winter, many homeowners face the expense and inconvenience of frozen water pipes in their home. You can cross that off your list of worries by taking a few simple precautions.

Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses. Detaching the hose allows water to drain from the pipe. Otherwise, a single hard, overnight freeze can burst either the faucet or the pipe it's connected to.

Insulate pipes or faucets in unheated areas. If you have pipelines in an unheated garage, basement or crawl space wrap the pipes before temperatures plummet. Hardware or building supply stores have good pipe wrapping and materials available.

Consider installing "heat tape" on exposed water pipes. These are relatively easy to install – just be sure to follow manufacturer's directions carefully.

Seal off access doors, air vents and cracks. Repair broken basement windows. Winter winds whistling through overlooked openings can quickly freeze exposed water pipes. However, do not plug the air vents your furnace or water heater needs for good combustion.

Locate the main shutoff for the water supply. It's most likely where the line comes through the wall from the street. If it's not there it may be near the water heater or washing machine. If a pipe bursts anywhere in the home this valve will shut it down so find it now and mark it by painting the handle a bright color or tag it so it is easily identified.

What if it's too late? What if you wake up one day to find your pipes frozen? During an extended hard freeze it could happen despite precautions. If you think you know where the pipe is frozen DO NOT use a torch or open flame, you could set the house on fire or melt the solder loose in a joint causing it to leak or come apart. The easiest tool is probably a hair dryer, use the low heat setting and wave the warm air back and forth along the pipe, not on just one spot. If you don't have a hair dryer you can try wrapping the pipe with rags or towels and pour hot (not boiling) water over them. It's messy but it works.

Be careful because the pipe may be broken but not leaking because the waters frozen. As you thaw the pipe out be ready to shut the water off at the master valve if necessary.