

## PREVENTING FROZEN PIPES

Winter weather produces cold snaps that can freeze pipes and cause them to break, unless they are properly protected. Even a small crack in a pipe can leak 250 gallons of water a day. This can cause ceilings or walls to collapse, soak carpets and flooring, and ruin furniture. If the occupants are away for a few days, such continuous leakage could cause so much damage that the house might have to be torn down and rebuilt! Never underestimate the destructive force of water.

Below are five steps a homeowner can take to reduce the likelihood of frozen pipes:

1. Insulate the most susceptible pipes – typically those at outside walls, in crawl spaces and in the attic. Seal cracks or leaks around doors, windows, and other areas of the house exposed to the exterior to eliminate the drafts that often cause pipes to freeze.
2. Before winter hits, disconnect outdoor hoses and wrap the faucets themselves to insulate them from the cold; if possible, purchase and install insulated covers that are held over the faucet with elastic bands and provide good protection against freezing.
3. Open cabinets below sinks and open faucets to allow a slow drip. Pipes normally break from elevated water pressure caused when ice blocks the pipe; a small drip can alleviate this problem.
4. Never use an open flame to try to heat a pipe; this could start a fire.
5. Set the thermostat no lower than 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you are to be away from home for several days during the winter, have a friend or neighbor check on the house periodically to be sure the heating system is still working, power is on, and so on.