

Prepare for Freezing Weather

Locate your water shut off

Make sure everyone in your residence knows where the water main shutoff valve is located and keep it clear of debris and obstacles at all times. For most homes in our service area, the property owner's shutoff valve is on your side of the water meter at the meter box.

If you cannot find your shutoff valve or if it is damaged, please contact the Utility Department at 830-693-3615.

Keep out cold air

Tightly close doors and windows to the outside. Make repairs to broken or drafty windows, doors, and walls. Seal all leaks in crawl spaces and basements. Winterize unheated spaces and close garage doors for the duration of the freeze.

Exposed pipes and water heaters

Insulate pipes in unheated and drafty areas, such as an attic or garage. Also check manufacturer recommendations for your tanked and tankless water heaters. Hardware and plumbing supply stores carry insulation to help keep pipes from freezing.

Outside faucets

Turn off outside faucets. Remove all connected hoses and wrap faucets with towels or a Styrofoam insulator. Turn off and drain automatic sprinkler systems.

Prepare before leaving town

If you plan to be away during a time when freezing temperatures are possible, turn off your water at the meter and set your thermostat to 65 degrees or higher.

During Freezing Weather (1-2 days)

Protect indoor faucets

Open cabinets beneath kitchen and bathroom sinks to allow warmer air to circulate around pipes. Be sure to remove any toxic substances located in these cabinets if there are children or pets living in the residence.

Drip only if needed

After the measures above are taken, drip one cold water faucet slowly if you feel your pipes may still freeze. The faucet you choose should be the one that is the greatest distance from your main shutoff valve. It does not need to be a running trickle. If you do drip your faucet, capture the water for future use. For informational videos and updated weather guidance go to: austinwater.org.

Power outages

If you experience a power outage for more than 24 hours, stop dripping your faucets and turn off your water at the meter.

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Thawing Pipes After a Freeze

After a period of freezing weather, if you turn on a faucet and discover only a trickle of water coming out, or no water at all, it is possible you have a frozen pipe or water meter. Take the following steps:

- **Test all faucets to see which are frozen**
 - If you find that none of your faucets are working, then the frozen pipe is located near the main water pipe entering the residence. If none of the faucets on the same floor are working, then the frozen pipe is located between the different floors. If none of the faucets in the same room are working, then the frozen pipe is located between the main water pipe and where the water enters the room.
- **Find the frozen part of the pipe**
 - After you figure out which pipe is frozen, trace along the affected pipe to look for signs of freezing like bulges, frost, or ice. If there are no visible signs, pay attention to the pipe's temperature and find where the pipe feels the coldest.
- **Thaw the pipe slowly**
 - Even the faintest trickle of water will help thaw a frozen pipe. If any of your faucets can run any water at all, turn them on. Completely open the cold-water faucet closest to the frozen pipe to relieve pressure and reduce the chance of breakage. If the frozen pipe is only in one area, you may be able to thaw the pipe by opening cabinets and allowing warmer air to circulate around the pipes. Use warm water to soak towels, then wrap the towels around the frozen pipes. You can use a hair dryer or a portable heater to thaw a pipe, but DO NOT use electrical appliances if there is standing water. NEVER thaw a pipe using an open flame.

If these steps do not work, contact a licensed plumber or your property manager for assistance.