

Extreme Cold Weather Tips

From the St. Joseph Water Department

Locate & Mark Your Water Service Shutoff

It is very important to know where the main water shut off valve is located inside of your home (or business). If a pipe breaks anywhere in the house – kitchen, bath, basement or crawl space – this valve will turn off the water. Typically that valve is located near the water meter, where the water line enters the building. Clearly marking the valve will ensure that everyone in the home knows where it is located and will allow you and others to find the valve quickly in an emergency.

Protect Your Water Meter

It is the property owner's responsibility to protect the water meter from freezing and damage. The space where the meter is located must be heated to protect it from freezing. The cost for replacement of a frozen or damaged meter is charged to the property owner. Extra precautions that can be taken during the extreme cold temperatures include:

- Insulating pipes located next to an outside wall, in a garage or other unheated building that are most susceptible to freezing temperatures. Exposed pipes in these areas should be wrapped or insulated, or alternatively shut off and drained prior to winter by the Water Department. If this is not possible, leave the tap slightly open. The running water may help to keep the line from freezing.
- Open cupboard doors under sinks, and where possible, open other areas where pipes run, especially where plumbing is in an exterior wall, to let interior heat warm the pipes.
- Temporarily keep a steady, but slow drip of cold water flowing at an inside faucet farthest from the meter to keep water moving and less likely to freeze. This precaution may also minimize your risk of frozen water service pipes. The cost to a customer to run a pencil lead thin stream of water (a rate 3 gallons per hour) costs +/- \$0.50 per day. *Note: If you are using more than a pencil lead thin stream then the cost will be more; you can do a bucket test to determine your specific cost.*
- If you are away for more an extended period, shut off your water and leave the thermostat at 55 degrees or higher to reduce the chance of broken pipes.
- Be a good neighbor and notify the Greater St. Joseph Water System at 269-983-6324 if you suspect or notice a leak at a vacant home or building.
- To learn more about preventing and thawing frozen pipes, please go to:
<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/winter-storm/preventing-thawing-frozen-pipes>

When Water Pipes Freeze:

- NEVER thaw a frozen pipe with a torch or an open flame; a hair dryer, a fan or blower such as the exhaust from a vacuum cleaner are safer alternatives.
- Do not use electrical appliances in areas of standing water. You could be electrocuted.
- If your water lines are frozen, they may have been broken or split so it is safest to contact a licensed plumber to avoid damage when pipes thaw.
- If there is no water to your home, the water may have been shut off to repair a broken water main in the street. If the Greater St. Joseph Water System is your water source and you need more information regarding your service, call us at 269-983-6324 or at the 24/7 after-hours emergency number at 269-983-2571.