

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND INTERVENE WHEN A PIPE HAS FROZEN OR BURST



Your home is at an elevated risk for frozen and burst pipes when temperatures are very cold but then rise quickly.

It's imperative that you remain alert and do everything you can to avoid frozen pipes when cold snaps are forecast for your area; these claims happen quickly and have the power to cause millions of dollars in damages.

Follow the advice below to help you recognize and intervene if a pipe has frozen or burst. If you are away from home or have a secondary home in an area where temperatures are expected to fall—or have recently fallen—below freezing, have your caretaker perform these steps at least twice a day.

How to check your home for signs of frozen or burst pipes:

1. **Inspect the interior of your home.** Walk through your entire house, especially rooms such as bathrooms, kitchens and laundry rooms and those below and adjacent to them. Look for actively dripping water and signs that water is leaking out of sight, such as damp drywall, rings on the ceiling, unusual odors or bubbling, banging, clanking or whistling noises. Finally, examine any exposed pipes, looking for frost, condensation or bulging areas.

2. **Inspect unheated areas of your home.** Water supply lines in unheated areas such as unfinished basements, crawl spaces, attics and garages are particularly susceptible to freezing. Check for leaks, pooled water, and the other warning signs listed above in these spaces as well.
3. **Check the functionality of your plumbing.** Only after you have completed the steps above, turn on the faucets (both hot and cold) and flush the toilets to ensure they are working and that the water has no discoloration or odor. An open faucet that produces a slow trickle—or no water at all—is a good reason to suspect that a pipe has frozen. Also check the water meter; if it shows movement when all water fixtures are off, it is likely that a pipe has burst.
4. **Inspect the exterior of your home.** Walk your property and notice whether water has accumulated anywhere it should not. Examine your yard for red flags like sinkholes.

How to intervene if a pipe has burst:

If you notice any of the warning signs listed above, shut off the water supply to the affected area of the house—or to the entire home, if necessary—and leave faucets open. You should then immediately call your plumber.

Last-minute steps to help avoid frozen or burst pipes:

- Ensure your heat is set to a minimum of 70°F. When it is very cold, setting the heat below this threshold may not be enough to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting—especially if your home is unoccupied.
- Open vanity and cabinet doors so warm air can reach pipes more easily.
- If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, consider shutting off your home's water supply.

To protect your home throughout the winter:

We recognize that maintaining a temperature of 65°F may not be economically practical at all times. We recommend installing a network-connected ("smart") thermostat, which will allow you to remotely monitor and adjust the temperature in your home in response to the forecast, reducing the risk of burst pipes and unnecessary spending on energy bills.