

Why let water trickle during freezing weather:

We have always been told to let a little bit of water trickle out of a faucet during freezing weather, but do you know why?

Some may answer: to prevent water freezing in a pipe which can cause the pipe to burst.

If you answered this you are actually only half right. The full reason is that water freezing in your water line, when all the water in your home is shut off, can cause the water pressure in that line to increase. As water in the supply line freezes, it expands pushing against all the water between it and your home. This build up in pressure can increase enough to cause a pipe to burst or fracture at its weakest link. Adequately insulating pipes can help to reduce or completely mitigate your pipes from freezing.

Allowing a faucet to drip can also help mitigate any potential trouble you may experience from a pipe freezing. Leaving a faucet with even the lowest drip can help provide pressure relief when needed. A dripping faucet does waste some water, so only pipes vulnerable to freezing (pipes that run through an unheated or unprotected space) should be left with the water flowing.

Preparing for a Freeze

You can protect your home by taking the following precautions to prepare your pipes for a freeze:

Inside Your House

1. Open the cabinets under the sinks in your kitchen and bathrooms to allow heated air to circulate around the water pipes.
2. Set your thermostat at a minimum of 55 degrees, especially when you're gone for the day or away for a long time.
3. Let indoor faucets drip, but don't run a heavy stream of water. (remember it only takes a small drip)

Outside Your House

1. Protect faucets, outdoor pipes, and pipes in unheated areas with pipe insulation. In a pinch wrapping them with rags, newspapers, trash bags, plastic foam or even bubble wrap can add needed protection.
2. Cover any vents around your home's foundation.
3. Drain water hoses and store them in a garage or shed.
4. Drain Irrigation water supply lines.
5. Protect outdoor electrical pumps.
6. Make sure you know where your home's water shut-off valve is and how to turn it on and off.
7. Consider turning off your water at the shut-off valve if you leave town. Leave your faucets on when you turn the water off to drain the pipes. Make sure you turn the faucets off before you turn the shut-off valve back on.

8. If you drain your pipes, do not forget to turn off the power to your water heater if it is electric and turn of the gas supply line the water heater if it is a gas appliance.