

Kentucky Division of Water offers cold weather water pipe protection tips

Prevent pipes from freezing, bursting

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 2, 2014) – With frigid temperatures and wind chills expected in the coming days, the Kentucky Division of Water reminds citizens to protect the water systems in their homes and businesses from freezing.

When water freezes, it expands. When water freezes in a pipe and expands enough, the pipe bursts, water escapes and serious damage results. Pipes in attics, crawl spaces and outside walls are all vulnerable to freezing, especially if there are cracks or openings that allow cold outside air to flow across the pipes.

To keep pipes from freezing, wrap hot and cold water pipes in insulation or layers of newspaper, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. Allow a trickle of water to run from a cold faucet that is farthest from the water meter or one that has frozen in the past. This will keep the water moving so that it cannot freeze and will help relieve pressure should ice form in the pipes. Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around the pipes.

If pipes freeze, remove the insulation, completely open all the faucets and pour hot water over the pipes or wrap them with towels soaked in hot water, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. You may also use a hand-held hair dryer or electric heating pad if there is no standing water. Apply heat until full water pressure is restored.

Do not use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove or other open flame device to thaw a pipe. A blowtorch can make water in a frozen pipe boil and cause the pipe to explode. All open flames in homes present a serious fire danger, as well as a severe risk of exposure to lethal carbon monoxide. If you are unable to locate or reach the frozen area, call a licensed plumber.

When away from the house for an extended period of time, consider draining the water system completely. To drain the system, shut off the main valve and turn on every water fixture (both hot and cold lines) until water stops running. When returning to the house, turn on the main valve and let each fixture run until the pipes are full again.

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