

City officials issue warning: protect plumbing from freezing weather

by Bend Weekly News Sources

With high temperatures not expected to rise above freezing with nightly lows dipping into the single digits for the next several days, Bend city officials have issued a warning to Bend residents and business-owners: take proper precautions to protect your plumbing from freezing or face possible costly water-related damage.

Tom Hickmann, Bend's Water Utility Manager, says the sustained period of sub-freezing weather prompted the warning, and offers tips on what to do if your pipes freeze or break.

If your pipes freeze, Hickmann suggests the following:*

- Thaw the lines safely. If you know where the lines are frozen, you can attempt to thaw them with a hair dryer set on low heat. Wave the dryer back and forth along the frozen area. Thawing won't be fast, but it will be safe. Do not leave the pipes unattended.*
- Do not use an open flame to thaw frozen water lines. It may be fast, but could catch the house on fire.*
- Do not use an electric arc welder to thaw frozen water lines. This also causes fire!*

When home plumbing is frozen, there is often water available at one faucet. Check to see if water is available at one of the faucets. If there is no water at all, the problem may be in the street. For assistance, please call 317-3000 day or night. If your pipes break:*

- Shut off the water and turn off your water heater.*
- If you are unable to find the shut-off valve, or have water leaking in the house from a broken pipe, City staff can help you shut off the water. Call the Public Works 24-hour emergency number 317-3000 for assistance.*

To repair the broken pipe, Public Works recommends calling a licensed plumber. The city offers the following special notice to contractors or builders regarding exposed water meters:

Incomplete structures that have water meters installed, or completed but unoccupied structures are at risk for frozen water meters. There is also an increased risk of freezing when final grading and landscaping have not been completed around the meter. It is the contractor's responsibility to protect these meters from freezing, per the water meter installation agreement. If you suspect a meter or backflow assembly is frozen, or if water is flowing from a meter box, call the Public Works 24-hour emergency number 317-3000 for assistance.

The American Red Cross recommends the following to prevent frozen pipes:

- * Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- * Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.
- * When the weather is very cold outside, let the cold water drip from the faucet served by exposed pipes. Running water through the pipe -- even at a trickle -- helps prevent pipes from freezing because the temperature of the water running through it is above freezing.
- * Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.
- * If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55°F.

Additional winterizing tips are available on the City's web site at www.ci.bend.or.us .

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