

Cold Weather Tips

Protect your pipes and meter from freezing

Don't be caught off guard by Maine's harsh winters with bone chilling temperatures and biting windchills. Avoid the hassle of frozen meters and pipes by taking a few simple precautions now!

Before cold weather hits, prepare with these precautions:

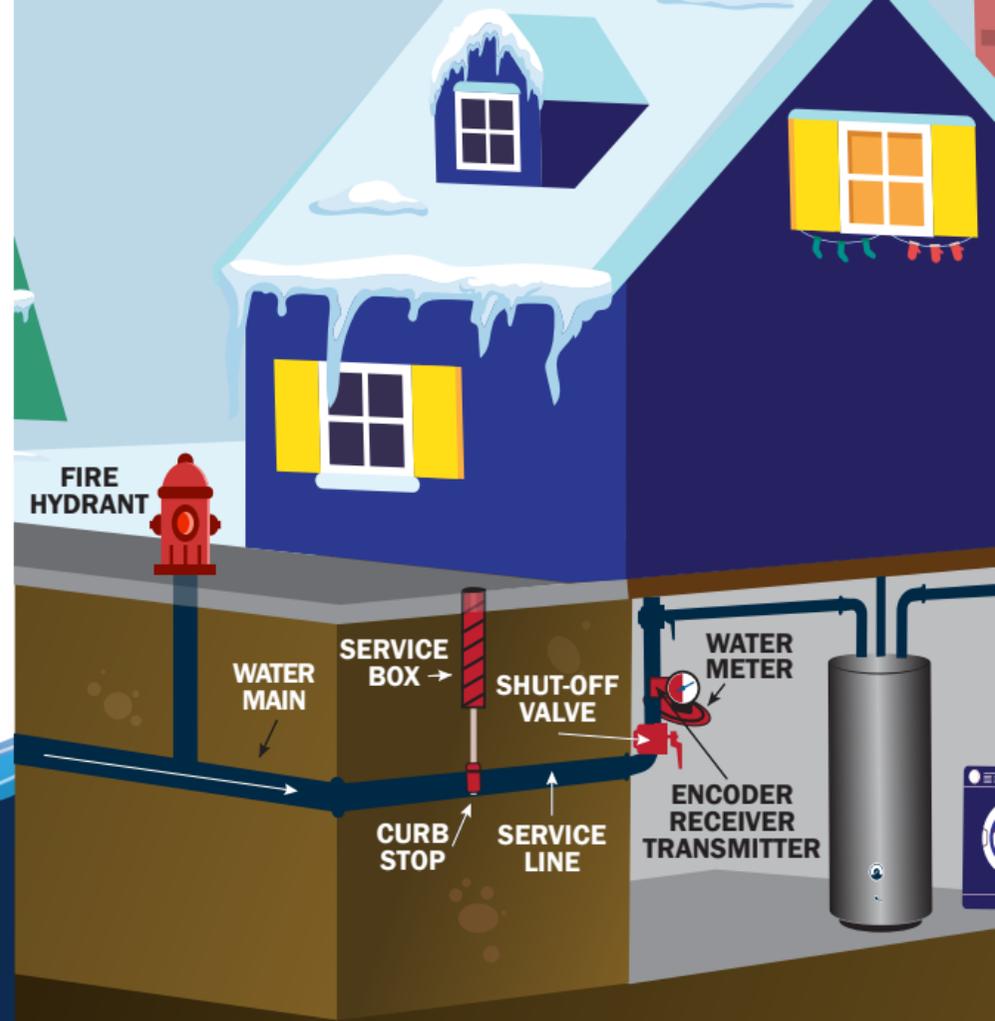
1. Know the location of your water shut-off valve and test it. If a pipe breaks, you won't want to waste time trying to locate the shut-off valve. In most single-family homes, the shut-off valve is in the basement or the crawl space.
2. Turn off outside faucets and disconnect hoses.
3. Patch any cracks and holes in doors, windows, and walls near pipes. When the temperature drops to near zero, a high wind blowing through a small opening can freeze a nearby pipe, even though the temperature in the room is 70°F.

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Portland Water District
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4. Insulate water meters, pipes, and faucets in unheated areas. Wrap pipes with pipe-insulating material, which is available at hardware stores.
5. Service your furnace regularly.
6. Make sure you have the name and telephone number of your plumber handy.
7. If you are leaving your house for an extended period of time, drain your pipes or lower the thermostat, but never shut it off. The lack of heat can freeze the pipes in the walls and basement. Freezing bursts the pipes, and when the house warms up, thawing water can cause flooding and significant damage.

If you suspect a frozen pipe:

1. The easiest and safest way to thaw a frozen pipe is to heat the room or use a hair dryer. Set the dryer on low heat and wave the warm air back and forth along the pipe. Placing a warm towel or rag around the pipe may also do the trick. Never use a torch or welder with an open flame to thaw.
2. Remember, the pipe may already be broken and when the water is thawed, it will leak.
3. If a burst pipe has flooded a basement or other space, make sure the power is shut off before you enter the area.

For more information on how you can prevent frozen water pipes, contact the Portland Water District at customerservice@pwd.org or 761-8310.



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