

Frozen Pipe Emergency Steps

SURVIVALSTOCKUP

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A practical response guide for no flow, suspected freezing, or a burst pipe.

LEAKING PIPE? SHUT OFF WATER IF SAFE. CALL A PLUMBER.

Start with safety. Keep away from standing water near electrical equipment. Do not cross water to reach a breaker or shutoff. Leave an unsafe area and call 911 for immediate danger. Do not delay urgent action to buy supplies.

01 CHECK WHAT IS HAPPENING

- ☐ **Compare several faucets**
Check hot and cold flow. One affected branch suggests a local problem; widespread loss may be a utility outage.
- ☐ **Look only where access is safe**
Use a [battery flashlight](#) to check exposed pipes for frost, bulges, splits or new dampness.
- ☐ **Check outage information**
Ask your utility about service disruptions. Renters: notify the landlord or emergency maintenance.

03 DECIDE IF YOU NEED HELP

- ☐ **Call for hidden or damaged pipes**
Get a licensed plumber for pipes inside walls, inaccessible areas, visible splits or uncertain conditions.
- ☐ **Do not disturb utility equipment**
Contact the water provider for meter or service-line problems. Do not operate street valves yourself.
- ☐ **Attempt only a simple, safe thaw**
Proceed only with an accessible pipe that appears intact, in a dry and safe area. Stay present throughout.

Never use a torch or open flame. Avoid boiling water and high-heat tools. Do not use electrical thawing equipment while standing in water or near wet wiring. Ice can hide a crack; a pipe may begin leaking only as it thaws.

02 CONTROL THE WATER

- ☐ **Locate your home shutoff**
If freezing or a leak is suspected, shut off the home supply before attempting to thaw. Do not force a stuck valve.
- ☐ **Keep a leaking line isolated**
Call a plumber. If you cannot stop the flow safely, contact the water utility for emergency assistance.
- ☐ **Open the affected faucet**
Leave it open while thawing so water can escape. Keep the sink drain clear and watch for leaks.

04 THAW SLOWLY & GENTLY

- ☐ **Apply controlled warmth**
Wrap the pipe with [cotton towels](#) soaked in hot, not scalding, water. Rewarm them as needed.
- ☐ **Work from the faucet end**
Start near the open faucet and move toward the frozen section. Do not force, strike or bend the pipe.
- ☐ **Stop if trouble appears**
If a split, leak or unsafe condition develops, stop thawing and keep water off. Call a plumber if thawing fails.

After Thawing & Follow-Up

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Restore water carefully, watch for damage, and reduce the chance of a repeat.

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05 RESTORE & CHECK

- ☐ **Inspect before reopening**
Leave water off for a plumber if damage is visible or you are unsure the pipe is sound.
- ☐ **Restore supply cautiously**
If piping appears intact and it is safe, slowly reopen the valve while a helper checks for leaks.
- ☐ **Check flow and keep watching**
Confirm normal flow, close faucets and recheck. Shut water off if leaks appear.

06 PREVENT ANOTHER FREEZE

- ☐ **Protect the problem pipe**
After repairs, fit suitable [pipe insulation](#). Ask a plumber about cold drafts or recurring freezes.
- ☐ **Add an early leak alert**
Place a [water leak alarm](#) near vulnerable areas. Test it; an alarm does not prevent freezing.
- ☐ **Keep warmth reaching pipes**
Maintain heat, open vulnerable sink cabinets and secure cleaners. Follow local advice during ongoing freezes.

Water damage needs prompt attention. Move belongings only if safe. Call your insurer or landlord about damage and arrange drying or restoration. Have wet electrical equipment checked before reuse. Follow any utility boil-water notice.

07 YOUR EMERGENCY RECORD

Main water shutoff location

Plumber / emergency phone

Water utility / emergency phone

Landlord / insurer / contact phone

Affected pipe / first noticed (date & time)

Water shut off / next inspection time

08 USEFUL RESPONSE & FOLLOW-UP GEAR

Battery flashlight - Amazon

Light accessible areas from a safe position.

Cotton towels - Amazon

For gentle warm-water thawing, if safe.

Pipe insulation sleeves - Amazon

For prevention after damage is repaired.

Water leak alarms - Amazon

Test batteries and alert audibility.

[Red Cross: frozen pipes](#)

[WaterOne: pipe guidance](#)

[Thames Water: response](#)