

Prevent Your Pipes from Freezing

Loss Control, Water Damage Prevention, 5

Frozen pipes can occur regardless of the season; sudden cold snaps can cause pipes to freeze and burst. A pipe bursting can cause extensive water damage and significantly impact your ministry. Learn how to identify areas in your church that may be at risk, and safe ways to minimize the risk of frozen pipes in your house of worship.

Common Risk Locations of Frozen Pipes:

Basements	Crawl Spaces	Maintenance buildings
Attics	Irrigation or lawn sprinklers	Temporary/modular buildings
Garages	Garden hose connections	Outdoor hose bibs

How To Prevent Frozen Pipes

- Identify pipes that are potentially exposed to freezing temperatures.
- Set thermostats to maintain building temperatures at 50°F or higher. Remember temperatures along exterior walls, enclosed docks, etc. will be several degrees colder than interior areas. Even heated areas that become drafty can have pipes freeze.
- Seal off access doors, air vents and cracks to prevent winds from coming through openings.
- Drain water supply lines for systems that can be shut down.
- Heat trace or insulate supply lines that must remain operational.
- Avoid using antifreeze in systems or fixtures.
- Close inside shut-off valves to hose bibs.
- Open outside valves to drain water. Leave outside taps open to allow condensation to drain and reduce the risk of water buildup inside the valve.
- Cover hose bibs that can't be shut off inside the building; available at most hardware stores.
- Detach hoses; even no-freeze hoses should be removed. Water in the hose can freeze and cause a freeze up in the hose bib and lead to failure.
- Heat trace drains/traps that are in concealed spaces or along exterior walls.
- Open doors to closets, cabinets, etc. that contain water supply or waste lines.
- Close doors to dry pipe sprinkler systems and heat the rooms.
- Keep all doors (including dock and garage) closed. Even if there are no pipes in the areas, keeping them closed can help protect other areas.

How To Safely Thaw Frozen Pipes

- If a pipe bursts, shut off the main water supply valve until you can isolate the leak.
- If you operate a fixture (sink, toilet, etc.) and no water flows, suspect a frozen pipe.
- Check the supply line to ensure that no supply valves are shut.
- If a pipe has frozen, leave a fixture (sink, hose bib, etc.) on as you thaw the pipe. As the ice begins to melt, water will flow. The flowing water will help thaw the ice plug faster.
- Apply heat to the frozen section of pipe. Use an electric heat gun, hairdryer, heating pad, or space heater.
- Do **not** use open flames such as torches, propane or kerosene heaters; keep combustible materials away from the heater.
- All electrical devices should be kept out of contact with water (puddles or water spraying from leaks). Use GFCI outlets to provide additional protection.
- Pipes can also be wrapped with towels that have been soaked in hot water.
- Check for leaks as the pipe begins to thaw. It is not uncommon for the ice plug to seal the leak.
- Check other supply lines and fixtures to determine the extent of pipe freeze-ups.
- Contact a licensed plumber to inspect and address the issue.