

Prevention Zone

Protection Tips



Winter Storm Preparation

Severe weather can produce freezing temperatures and power outages. In addition, using alternative heat sources may add the risks of fire, electric shock and carbon monoxide poisoning. The Red Cross proposes the following steps to insure your safety. As always, please use your best judgment when taking these measures and consult a professional as needed.

Ready your home

- Move items indoors if they could be buffeted by wind (e.g., patio furniture, garbage cans, toys, etc.)
- Elevate any items in the basement that could be damaged by flooding
- Insulate any exposed water lines and caulk any openings which may allow cold air to flow across interior supply lines
- Know the location of your main water shut-off in the event you suffer a burst pipe
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Ensure that family members can locate and operate fire extinguishers

If your area is blanketed by extreme cold

- Expose water pipes to warm air flow by opening doors to under-sink cabinets (remember to remove any harmful products and place them out of reach of young children and pets)
- Open doors to closets where you suspect water lines may run through the walls. If water lines run through the garage, keep any/all garage doors closed.
- Adjust your thermostat so that it does not reduce the overnight temperature
- Periodically flush the toilets and run faucets (this helps relieve pressure that builds up when pipes freeze, causing them to burst). Trickle water from faucets connected to pipes you suspect will freeze overnight.
- A hair dryer may be used to help thaw pipes. Open the faucet and slowly direct air across the pipe starting at the faucet end. Do not use electrical appliances when standing in water.
- If you use auxiliary heaters, be careful to set them up at least three feet from draperies, bedding and other flammables. Plug them directly into the wall (i.e., avoid using extension cords). Turn them off before you leave the room or go to bed.
- Vent all fuel-burning heaters to the outside
- Run back-up generators outside only
- Never use the oven to heat the house

If you lose power

- A recent study suggests that 20 degrees is the temperature at which un-insulated water pipes freeze, but pipes exposed to flowing, subfreezing air are at risk even above this level
- If you cannot adequately heat your home, IBHS suggests that you drain the plumbing system by closing the main water valve and running every water fixture (both hot and cold) until the water stops
- Monitor local news channels for weather updates and go to designated public shelters if you are alerted to continued, extreme cold

Visit the [Encompass Insurance Web site](#) and the [Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety](#) for more, helpful information.