

Cold Weather Preparedness



Protection and prevention are the keys to keeping your water running in cold weather. With the onset of winter, unpredictable weather can sneak up on you and wreak havoc on unprepared water pipes. Icy winds and dipping temperature can do a lot of damage to your home by freezing pipes and leaving you without flowing water.

Before Freezing Weather

- Disconnect and drain hoses from outside faucets.
- Wrap outside faucets with insulation, newspaper or cardboard.
- Turn off and drain irrigation systems and backflow assemblies. Wrap backflow assemblies with insulating material.
- Insulate pipes in unheated areas, such as the garage, crawl space or attic.
- Show household members how to turn off water to the house in case of emergencies.

During Freezing Weather

- Open cupboard doors under sinks (especially where plumbing is in exterior walls) to let the interior home's heat warm the pipes.
- Temporarily allow a steady drip of cold water at an inside faucet farthest from the meter. This keeps water moving in the pipes making it less likely to freeze.
- If you are going to be away for any length of time shutting off the water can reduce the chance of a broken pipe. Leave the home's heat on to at least 55°. Shut off water to the house and open all faucets to drain pipes; flush the toilets once to drain the tank but not the bowl. Call 262-569-2196 to request a shut-off at the meter.
- Be a good neighbor. If a neighbor is away or you are next to a vacant house, notify Oconomowoc Utilities if you suspect a leak.
- Check on others to make sure they are OK.

If Your Pipes Freeze

- NEVER thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame. You may start a fire and your pipe may burst. Use hot air from a hair dryer, the exhaust from a vacuum cleaner, or a closely monitored heat lamp or electric heater.
- If your lines are frozen, assume that they may be broken or split. Be ready to shut off your water in a hurry when the line thaws.
- If your pipe breaks, shut off the water at the shut-off valve and turn off the circuit breaker or gas to the water heater.
- If there is no water at all to your home, the problem may be at the street. If the water service is frozen at the meter or the service to the water main, it is the City's responsibility. Call us at 262-569-2196 - 24 hours a day.

Shutting off your water

If a water pipe broke in your home, could you find the shut-off valve?

You should know where it is located before you have an emergency. There should be a valve in or near the house.

Look in the following places:

- In the crawl space or basement near where the water first enters the house
- In the garage where the water line enters the wall or ceiling, near the water heater or laundry hookup
- Outside near the foundation, often protected by a concrete ring or clay pipe
- You might want to have a shut off valve installed if you cannot locate one. If you have an emergency and need help shutting off your water at the meter please call the Oconomowoc Utilities at 262-569-2196.



Waterline Main Breaks

Although water main breaks are rare, they do occur from time to time. When they do happen, we immediately send our crews out to the leak and work until the leak is fixed. Water service may be interrupted. The best thing to do is be patient, leave faucets turned off, and avoid the area where the leak occurs, if possible.