Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority

PREPARE FOR COLD WEATHER — WINTER WATER TIPS

Each winter, many homeowners face the expense and inconvenience of frozen water pipes. Here are a few simple precautions you can take to prevent them from freezing.

- **Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses**. Detaching a hose allows water to drain from the spigot. Otherwise a single, overnight freeze can burst either the spigot or the pipe it's connected to.
- **Insulate pipes or faucets in unheated areas**. If you have pipes in the attic, an unheated garage, or crawl space under the house, wrap pipes before temperatures drop. Hardware or building supply stores will have good pipe wrapping materials available.
- **Seal off access doors, air vents, and cracks**. Winter winds whistling through overlooked openings can quickly freeze exposed water pipes.
- **Find the master shutoff valve**. Typically located in the basement, where the water line from the street enters the home. This valve stops the flow of water into the home and can stop a burst pipe from leaking. Find it and be sure everyone in the family knows where it is and what it does.
- **Allow taps to drip**. In severe cold weather, allow a faucet to drip a small continuous stream.
- **Find a local plumber**. Save the name and phone number of a local plumber and have it handy throughout the winter. You may need to call one.

My pipes froze! Now what?

- **Do you know where the freeze occurred?** If you think you do and want to thaw it yourself, do not under any circumstances use a torch with an open flame which would create a dangerous fire hazard. Also, overheating a single spot can burst the pipe. Heating a soldered joint could allow it to leak or come completely apart.
- **Use a hairdryer**. The easiest tool for thawing a pipe is a hairdryer. Wave the warm air along the pipe, not on one spot. If you don't have a hairdryer, wrap the frozen section with rags or towels and pour hot water over them.
- **Turn off the master shutoff valve**. Before attempting to thaw frozen pipes, turn off the master shutoff valve. Once the pipe is thawed, a leak could be exposed if the pipe is broken.

Be kind to our rivers. Use less salt.

Less is more when it comes to applying road salt. It takes only one teaspoon of road salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water. Once in the water, there is no way to remove the chloride, and at high concentrations, it can pollute our rivers and harm fish and plant life.

- **Shovel first**. The more snow and ice you remove manually, the less salt you will have to use. Then, break up ice with an ice scraper and decide if applying a de-icer is necessary to maintain traction.
- **Use sparingly**. More salt does not mean more melting. Use less than four pounds of salt per 1,000 square feet (an average parking space is about 150 square feet). One pound of salt would fill a 12-ounce coffee mug. And be patient: salt takes time to work. Applying more will lead to unnecessary contamination.
- **Wait for warmer temperatures**. Most salts stop doing their job when the temperature is below 15 degrees. Instead, use sand for traction in frigid conditions. Sweep up extra salt. If salt or sand is visible on dry pavement, it is no longer doing any work and will be washed away. Sweep it up and save for the next storm.

Any customer who needs additional information should call:
PWSA Emergency Dispatch 24/7 at 412.255.2423

Penn Liberty Plaza I
1200 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh PA 15222

info@pgh2o.com
T 412.255.2423
F 412.255.2475

www.pgh2o.com
@pgh2o

Customer Service /
Emergencies:
412.255.2423