

Brewer Water Department

A Checklist For

Winter Weather and Frozen Pipes

To minimize the potential for frozen pipes, take note of the suggestions below.

Before Winter:

Disconnect and drain outdoor faucets, and shut them off inside.

Patch cracks and holes near pipes. When temperatures approach zero, wind through a small opening can freeze nearby pipes, even though the room temperature is 70 degrees.

Insulate pipes in unheated areas such as crawl spaces and garages. Check insulation! Wet insulation freezes fast, making it worse than no insulation at all.

Make sure heat can circulate around pipes. Plumbing in an enclosed area such as a closet will freeze.

Pay attention to basement piping. Older furnaces lose enough heat to warm basements. Newer energy efficient models do not. Consider UL approved heat tape.

Find and tag your inside water shut-off valve, and make sure it works BEFORE an emergency arises. This will limit water damage should inside pipes burst.

If your line freezes outside:

Call us as soon as possible. We will remove the water meter and check for ice. Sometimes, only the meter is frozen.

If the meter is not the problem, we will attempt to determine which side of the service line is frozen. We can use our thawing equipment, or you may choose to have a plumber or welder attempt to thaw the line. If the line is frozen on the customer's side, it is the customer's responsibility to pay for the thawing. If the line is frozen on the Department's side then we are responsible for the thawing. If the freeze location cannot be determined, we will split the cost of thawing per Maine Public Utilities Commission regulations.

We respond to frozen service complaints in the order in which they are received, and other emergencies--such as broken water mains--may take.

If your pipes freeze:

Don't use an open flame for thawing. You risk overheating a pipe and causing it to burst, or setting the house on fire.

Use a hair dryer at a low setting and wave the heat along the pipe.

Use caution. The pipe may already be broken, and water may pour out when the pipe thaws.