

Winterizing Homes

David Waldroup – Environmental Engineer, TWU

WHEN A WINTER STORM IS PREDICTED and TEMPRATURES WILL BE BELOW FREEZING FOR MORE THAN 8 HOURS

- 1) Locate the house shut off valve and insure it is accessible (Precautionary)
- 2) Inspect outside faucets to ensure insulation or covers are still in place.
- 3) Open cabinet doors in bathrooms, utility rooms, and kitchen, this will help warm air circulate inside cabinets.
- 4) Plumbing along outside walls, especially the north side of house is the most susceptible to freezing. Drip the water on these faucets to keep the water moving to prevent freezing. A small drip is all that is required the faucet does not have to be flowing
- 5) Have a supply of water on hand, roughly 1 gallon per person per day for cooking, drinking, and washing. Additional water is needed for toilets, roughly 1 gallon per flush, can save left over water from washing for the toilets. (Precautionary)
- 6) If a faucet freezes do not attempt to thaw with a hair dryer, heat gun, or torch. Open faucet fully and wait for it to thaw. Frozen water expands as it melts and by heating the water may expand too fast and rupture pipe. Allowing to thaw over time minimizes this risk.
- 7) In the event of a broken pipe turn water off at the outside shutoff valve and call plumber.
- 8) If the house does not have a shutoff valve call TWU at 903-798-3880 (M-F 8:00- 5:00) or 903-798-3850 on weekends or before 8:00 or after 5:00. Tell the person your name, address, a contact number and that you need you water shut off due to a broken pipe. Call Plumber

OUTSIDE FAUCETS (on the side of the house or free standing in the yard)

- 1) Check to see if any are leaking or dripping when turned off. Repair as needed. This repair may require calling a plumber.
- 2) Remove all hoses and other attachments from these faucets and store for the winter.
- 3) Cover faucets with faucet covers or wrap with insulation.

IRRIGATION SYSTEMS (If Installed)

- 1) Turn irrigation system off and drain the backflow preventer. Insulate the backflow preventer with an insulated box or wrap with insulation.
- 2) If the backflow preventer is installed with couplings, turn irrigation system off, remove backflow preventor and store for the winter, cover the pipes that stick up out of the ground where the backflow preventer is installed to prevent debris, or small creatures from entering that would clog the lines in the spring.

*This is a service a landscaping business or your backflow tester could provide for a small fee.

PLUMBING INSIDE THE HOME

- 1) Check faucets for leaks or drips. Small drips over time will increase your water usage since the water will be running continuously. Repair as needed.
- 2) Check toilets for leaks. Food coloring may be used or contact TWU for leak detector tablets.
- 3) Check insulation on pipes in attic and under house (if house is above ground) Replace / install insulation as needed. (This may not be possible due to space or individual's mobility)

HOME EXTERIOR

- 1) Caulk cracks around window and door frames. Replace caulk in these areas if worn or has gaps.

- 2) Caulk around any pipe that enters the house from the outside (Gas, telephone, cable, HVAC)
- 3) Add door seals if needed to stop drafty doors.

*These steps prevent cold air entering the home and warm air from leaving.

- 4) Locate the homes exterior water shut off valve and check to see if it is operational. (This is a precautionary measure) If house does not have one or if the one installed does not work consider having one installed or existing one repaired.

HOME INTERIOR

- 1) Windows, place curtains on the windows. Open during sunny days to allow solar warming to aid in warming your home, close in the evening to aid in keeping the warmth in the home.
- 2) Check electrical receptacle covers and light switch covers for drafts (especially along exterior walls), if draft is felt special premade insulation panels may be purchased and installed. Installation involves removing cover, installing the insulation, and replacing cover. No special tools or skills required.
- 3) Check other areas for drafts and repair, as necessary.
- 4) Add insulation to attic if needed and possible.
- 5) Check furnace filters and replace as necessary, this helps you heating system work as efficiently as possible.
- 6) Clean vents in the ceiling or walls, dust to remove all buildup. This will help with odors and allergies.

*These are the easiest steps to prepare your home for the upcoming winter cold. Additionally, these same items will help keep your house cool in the summer.