



Are your water meter and pipes protected from the cold? Illinois American Water offers helpful tips to avoid unwanted frustration

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BELLEVILLE — Illinois American Water reminds homeowners that now is the time to safeguard their home plumbing to prevent water damage from frozen and burst pipes. Tips also address frozen water meters, which can bring costly plumbing repairs and replacement fees along with headaches and unexpected expense for homeowners.

“We want to remind customers that sub-freezing temperatures for an extended period can cause pipes in vulnerable areas to freeze and burst, resulting in costly damage,” said Mike Smyth, vice president of operations. “By taking the proper preventive steps now, customers can avoid frozen pipes and water meters and the need to make expensive repairs to damaged plumbing inside and outside of the home.”

Illinois American Water encourages residents to take the following precautions to reduce the risk of freezing and bursting pipes:

Before frigid weather sets in:

- Know what areas of your home, such as basements, crawl spaces, unheated rooms and outside walls, are most vulnerable to freezing.
- Eliminate sources of cold air near water lines by repairing broken windows, insulating walls, closing off crawl spaces and eliminating drafts near doors.
- Know the location of your main water shut-off valve. If a pipe freezes or bursts, shut the water off immediately.

- Protect your pipes and water meter. Wrap exposed pipes with insulation or use electrical heat tracing wire; newspaper or fabric might also work. For outside meters, keep the lid to the meter pit closed tightly and let any snow that falls cover it. Snow acts as insulation so do not disturb it.

When temperatures are consistently at or below freezing:

- If you have pipes that are vulnerable to freezing, allow a small trickle of water to run overnight to keep pipes from freezing. The cost of the extra water is low compared to the cost to repair a broken pipe. Illinois American Water also encourages customers to capture the water for wise water use. The water can be used to water indoor plants and more.
- Open cabinet doors to expose pipes to warmer room temperatures to help keep them from freezing.

If your pipes freeze:

- Shut off the water immediately. Do not attempt to thaw frozen pipes unless the water is shut off. Freezing can often cause unseen cracks in pipes or joints.
- Apply heat to the frozen pipe by warming the air around it, or by applying heat directly to a pipe. You can use a hair dryer, space heater or hot water. Be sure not to leave space heaters unattended, and avoid the use of kerosene heaters or open flames.
- Once the pipes have thawed, turn the water back on slowly and check for cracks and leaks.

When you are away:

- Have a friend, relative or neighbor regularly check your property to ensure that the heat is working and the pipes have not frozen.
- Also, a freeze alarm can be purchased for less than \$100 and will call a user-selected phone number if the inside temperature drops below 45 degrees.

Illinois American Water also advises that sub-freezing temperatures can cause aging water mains to break and cause water to cover roadways. If you see a leak, your water service is disrupted or you experience low pressure, please contact the company's 24/7 customer service center at 800-422-2782 to report an emergency. For general inquiries, call between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. More tips can be found at www.illinoisamwater.com in our online learning center.

About Illinois American Water

Illinois American Water, a subsidiary of American Water (NYSE: AWK), is the largest investor-owned water utility in the state, providing high-quality and reliable water and /or wastewater services to approximately

1.3 million people. American Water also operates a customer service center in Alton and a quality control and research laboratory in Belleville.

With a history dating back to 1886, American Water is the largest and most geographically diverse U.S. publicly-traded water and wastewater utility company. The company employs more than 6,700 dedicated professionals who provide regulated and market-based drinking water, wastewater and other related services to an estimated 15 million people in 47 states and Ontario, Canada. More information can be found by visiting www.amwater.com.