

Dear Customer,

We have recently had an uptick of complaints about water bills that seem too high. Toilets are by far the main source of water use in the home, accounting for nearly 30% of an average home's indoor water consumption.

- **Upgrade your toilet:** Efficiency measures such as replacing water-guzzling toilets with the latest in low-flush toilet technology helps to conserve and protect the water supply. Recent advancements have allowed toilets to use 1.28 gallons per flush or less while still providing equal or superior performance.
- **Check for leaks:** Toilets are notorious for silent leaks and can waste thousands of gallons of water. It is easy to check for a toilet leak. Simply put a few drops of food coloring into the tank. Do not flush the toilet. If the toilet is leaking, the color will appear in the bowl within 10-15 minutes. Once you have completed the test, flush the toilet, since food coloring may stain the tank. If a leak is discovered, check the toilet for worn out, corroded, or bent/stuck parts, especially the "flapper" valve.
- **Check outdoor spigots:** A leaking or left on hose can run up your water bill

It's the cold truth: Preventing frozen pipes is far easier than replacing pipes that freeze and burst. And that's not even considering paying for the damage to your home and possessions that can result from burst pipes.

Water pipes and meters can freeze within hours of the onset of sub-freezing weather – if they're exposed to cold air or drafts. Property owners are responsible for protecting their water pipes and water meters (interior or exterior) from cold air and wind.

Fortunately, that's relatively easy to do. These steps will help you prevent the damage, expense and inconveniences of having your pipes or water meter freeze.

Before Freezing Weather

- Find the main water shut-off valve to your home. Show all household members how to turn it off in case of a burst pipe or similar emergency.
- The pipes most likely to freeze are those nearest an uninsulated wall, door, window, garage, attic, basement or along an uninsulated floor.
- Add insulation to exterior walls wherever possible and wrap pipes with insulation.
- Eliminate cold drafts near water pipes and, if yours is indoors, your water meter. (See below for keeping outside meters from freezing.) Make sure all doors and windows to the outside are tightly closed, including those in basements and crawl spaces. Fill cracks in walls and around windows, replace cracked glass, and install storm windows on basement windows.
- Disconnect and drain garden hoses from outside faucets, and turn off the connection to those faucets at the interior valve. Drain any exposed pipes. Insulate outside faucets and backflow

devices with newspaper, rags or similar material, covering them with plastic and securing with string or wire.

- Winterize irrigation systems.
- If your kitchen or bathroom sink is located against an outside wall, insulate the wall and exposed pipes. Open cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around the pipes.
- Keep the doors to rooms where the pipes and water meter are located so warm air can keep temperatures above freezing.
- Cover foundation vents with foam blocks or cardboard.
- If your water meter is in an outdoor pit, check to see that the pit cover fits properly and has no cracks through which cold air can flow. Inside the pit, check to make sure that the pipes, valves and water meter itself aren't touching the pit's walls. (The "pit" is a cylindrical casing with a metal cover about the size of a dinner plate or saucer.)
- Letting a faucet fed by pipes exposed to extremely cold weather drip can prevent the water inside from freezing. Flowing water can still freeze but this method makes it somewhat more difficult for the water to freeze.
- When you're away, never completely shut off the heat unless you drain all the pipes and toilets first. If you do this, be sure to turn off your water heater first, and drain your heating system's pipes and radiators, too.
- Flowing water can also break up ice that has started to freeze inside pipes. Turn on the water periodically at all faucets that are exposed to cold air when outside temperatures have been below freezing for several days.