



# MCWD Winterization Tips



With the return of winter to the Eastern Sierra, residents are preparing with snow shovels, snow tires, tire chains, and warm insulated clothing. However, how many of us think about preparing the pipes in our homes for the cold temperatures the winter brings? Every year, homeowners struggle with the financial difficulties, destruction, and simple frustration that come with freezing and bursting water pipes. Much of the expense and trauma associated with frozen pipes can be reduced if customers winterize before the cold hits and the damage has been done. The Mammoth Community Water District recommends that customers help minimize water waste by taking note of the following preparations.

## Yard Irrigation



Did you know that an eighth-inch (three millimeter) crack in a pipe can spew up to 250 gallons (946 liters) of water a day? Both plastic (PVC) and metal pipes are at risk for bursting. The District recommends taking the following precautions for preventing property damage due to freezing water pipes.

For underground irrigation systems:

- Turn off the water to the irrigation system at main valve
- Set the automatic irrigation controller to the "rain" setting, which shuts off the signal to the valves
- Turn on each of the valves to release pressure in the pipes
- Drain all of the water out of any irrigation components that might freeze and either suck out any remaining water with a wet/dry shop vacuum or blow it out using an air compressor (professional help is recommended)
- Insulate any exposed pipes

For above-ground irrigation systems:

- Turn off outdoor faucets and disconnect garden hoses
- If practical, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets
- Insulate outside faucets with a Styrofoam cover, rags or paper
- Disconnect garden hoses from “frost-free” hose bibs

## **Inside the house** ❄️

A big part of proper water use involves the care of the valves and pipes that carry water around your house. During the especially cold winter months here in Mammoth Lakes, uninsulated pipes can freeze and then crack or burst. Damaged pipes are not only expensive to repair; they waste water by not transporting it to its intended destination. Luckily, frozen pipes are easy to avoid if simple steps are taken before the weather drops to freezing temperatures.

Start by checking for uninsulated pipes, both hot and cold, in unheated areas such as the basement and under kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Be aware the hot water pipes generally freeze before pipes that carry cold water. Pipes that tend to be most susceptible to freezing are typically those found in the outer walls, in crawl spaces, the attic, or the garage. If you find any exposed pipes, insulate them with items such as pipe wrap, heat tape, and foam jackets. Insulating products like these are available at local building supply retailers or hardware stores. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions carefully to install these products. If you still have questions, call a plumber for help before the cold gets out of hand. An alternative to tape or cable is wrapping pipes with several layers of newspaper.

Be sure to seal any leaks that allow cold air inside near where pipes are located. A tiny opening can let in enough cold air to cause a pipe to freeze. Check for leaks around electrical wiring, dryer vents, and pipes. Use caulk or insulation to block off the cold air.

## **Seasonal Homes** ❄️

Another unfortunate winter water waste occurs when the water to seasonal homes is turned off incorrectly. Many homes here in Mammoth Lakes have shut-off valves to the whole house. This valve, however, not only shuts off the water but also drains all the cold water pipes in the house. If the valve isn’t closed correctly, the water will not drain but will continue to feed the house and flow out the drain valve port. This results in water simply flowing through the house, causing a

huge water bill and waste of water. To properly shut off the water to the house, make sure that this valve has been completely turned and turn on every faucet until the water stops running. However, be aware that this valve doesn't necessarily drain all the water out of the house and that you may need to drain the hot water heater and insulate any pipes that have low points in them where water may settle. Make sure that if you drain your hot water heater, that you also turn off the electric or gas power source to this unit. Also, be sure to drain toilets by holding down the lever until the tank empties and pour biodegradable antifreeze into sinks and toilets. Another option for seasonal homeowners is to maintain their thermostats at about 55 degrees and to insulate any exposed pipes in and under the house. Be sure to open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow heat from the room to circulate around uninsulated pipes. With moderate temperatures, water in the pipes will be unable to freeze and cause damage while you are away.

**Thank you!**



These steps should help prevent damage to your irrigation systems and indoor pipes, will reduce the chance of water waste through pipe bursts, and will save you money. Thank you for doing your part to conserve water in order to ensure our water supplies for future years.

