



Frozen Pipes and What You Can Do About Them

What are some common reasons for frozen pipes?

- Unheated basement where the water meter and pipes are located.
- Uninsulated pipes running against cold outside walls.
- Open or broken windows near water meters or pipes.
- Openings or cracks that allow cold air to affect the water meter or pipes.
- Water meter and water pipes enclosed or boxed in against outside walls

How will I know if my pipes are frozen?

- Generally, when a pipe that feeds a certain fixture such as a shower, sink or toilet freezes, you will not be able to get water from that fixture.

Why do frozen water pipes break?

- When water freezes within a pipe, the volume of water expands. The same amount of water takes up more space as a solid than as a liquid. This causes the pipes to expand and possibly break at a weak point. You may notice this immediately, or it may not become apparent until the pipe begins to thaw with the break occurring only when full water pressure is restored.

Does this apply to water service lines (the pipes that run from the house to the street) as well as indoor pipes?

- YES! Water service lines can freeze when the ground frost gets deep enough to encase your service line in ice. However, this generally happens only when your service line is less than five feet below the surface of the ground.

What is a water service line?

- A water service line is the pipe that connects to the VCS's water main in the street and brings fresh water into your home. This line should have valves on it that allows your water to be turned on or off. It is usually located in the basement. If you have a slab-foundation house instead of a basement or crawl space, your shut-off valve may be at the

point where the water supply pipes come up through the slab. It is a good idea to tag this valve so you can find it quickly in an emergency.

Which parts of these service lines are my responsibility, and which are the responsibility of the Valparaiso City Services?

- The resident's responsibility for maintenance begins immediately after the curb stop and extends through the entire home. The resident is also responsible for the shut-off valve next to the water meter, although the meter itself is the property of the VCU.

What should I do if my pipes freeze?

- Your best course of action is to call a professional plumber as the Valparaiso City Services does not deal with frozen service lines or pipes.

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