



# Winter Weather Preparedness Tips

## Prepare for Freezing Weather

### Locate your water shutoff

Make sure everyone in your residence knows where the water main shutoff valve is located and keep it clear of debris and obstacles at all times.

In an emergency, Austin Water recommends you always try to shut off your water at your property owner's cutoff valve first. For most homes in our service area, the property owner's shutoff valve is on your side of the water meter at the meter box. If you are not sure where, check the property inspection report from when you purchased your residence.

For renters, please consult with your property manager.

If you cannot find your shutoff valve or if it is damaged, then you should be prepared to access the City shutoff valve in the meter box. You may need a water meter key to open the meter box, during an emergency, which can be purchased at most hardware stores.

### Keep out cold air

Tightly close doors and windows to the outside. Make repairs to broken or drafty windows, doors, and walls. Seal all leaks in crawl spaces and basements. Winterize unheated spaces and close garage doors for the duration of the freeze.

### Exposed pipes and water heaters

Insulate pipes in unheated and drafty areas, such as an attic or garage. Also check manufacturer recommendations for your tanked and tankless water heaters. Hardware and plumbing supply stores carry insulation to help keep pipes from freezing.

### Outside faucets

Turn off outside faucets. Remove all connected hoses and wrap faucets with towels or a Styrofoam insulator. Turn off and drain automatic sprinkler systems.

### Prepare before leaving town

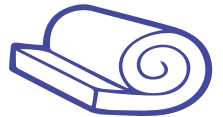
If you plan to be away during a time when freezing temperatures are possible, turn off your water at the meter and set your thermostat to 65 degrees or higher.

## Emergency Supplies to have on hand:

**Water meter key** to access your meter box if necessary



**Insulation** for indoor and outdoor pipes



**Hose bib covers** for outdoor faucets



**Battery powered radio and flashlight**



Have enough **water for 1 gallon per person/pets per day for 7 days**



**New My ATX Water meter box lids** have been exchanged, but should be accessible with a standard meter box lid key. There is a spring mechanism that requires pressing down with the meter key before turning the key to open the lid. Note that the lid is wired to the meter inside the box. Be careful to avoid damaging these wires.



Water

AustinWater.org    

Sign up on the [myatxwater.org](https://myatxwater.org) **customer portal** to track water use and get alerts when water use increases for possible leaks.





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## During Freezing Weather (1-2 days)

### ■ Protect indoor faucets

Open cabinets beneath kitchen and bathroom sinks to allow warmer air to circulate around pipes. Be sure to remove any toxic substances located in these cabinets if there are children or pets living in the residence.

### ■ Drip only if needed

After the measures above are taken, drip one cold-water faucet slowly if you feel your pipes may still freeze. The faucet you choose should be the one that is the greatest distance from your main shutoff valve. It does not need to be a running trickle. If you do drip your faucet, capture the water for future use.

### ■ Power outages

If you experience a power outage for more than 24 hours, stop dripping your faucets and turn off your water at the meter.

## For an Extended Freeze (more than 2 days)

Austin Water will monitor conditions that impact our water infrastructure throughout the freeze. Follow instructions from Austin Water for the best guidance on protecting your pipes and Austin's water system infrastructure:



For updates and instructional videos go to: [austinwater.org](https://austinwater.org)

## Thawing Pipes After a Freeze

After a period of freezing weather, if you turn on a faucet and discover only a trickle of water coming out, or no water at all, it is possible you have a frozen pipe or water meter. Take the following steps:

### ■ Test all faucets to see which are frozen

If you find that none of your faucets are working, then the frozen pipe is located near the main water pipe entering the residence. If none of the faucets on the same floor are working, then the frozen pipe is located between the different floors. If none of the faucets in the same room are working, then the frozen pipe is located between the main water pipe and where the water enters the room.

### ■ Find the frozen part of the pipe

After you figure out which pipe is frozen, trace along the affected pipe to look for signs of freezing like bulges, frost, or ice. If there are no visible signs, pay attention to the pipe's temperature and find where the pipe feels the coldest.

### ■ Thaw the pipe slowly

Even the faintest trickle of water will help thaw a frozen pipe. If any of your faucets can run any water at all, turn them on. Completely open the cold-water faucet closest to the frozen pipe to relieve pressure and reduce the chance of breakage. If the frozen pipe is only in one area, you may be able to thaw the pipe by opening cabinets and allowing warmer air to circulate around the pipes. Use warm water to soak towels, then wrap the towels around the frozen pipes. You can use a hair dryer or a portable heater to thaw a pipe, but DO NOT use electrical appliances if there is standing water. **NEVER** thaw a pipe using an open flame.

**If these steps do not work, contact a licensed plumber or your property manager for assistance.**



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