

Frozen Pipes

Once you realize you have a frozen pipe on your hands, you must take swift action to thaw it. Frozen pipes have the potential to burst. If the water pipe does burst, it can cause serious damage and flooding in your property, which is a problem you want to avoid. The location of the frozen pipe and your level of experience will determine if you may be able to thaw the pipe yourself or if you need to hire a professional to do so.

Locate the Frozen Pipe

In order to thaw a frozen pipe, you must first determine which pipe or pipes are frozen. Turn on the faucets in your property. If no water comes out, or only a slight trickle escapes, then a pipe leading to the faucet is likely frozen. If one pipe is frozen, there is a chance others have frozen also.

If the pipes are exposed, such as pipes under sinks, in basements or along the exterior of the house, you may be able to visually see the frozen portion of the pipe. Frozen pipes often have frost on them or may have a slight bulge. If the blockage is located in part of the pipe that you have access to, you will have more options for easily thawing the pipe than if the frozen portion is enclosed behind a wall.

Open the Faucet

Before you begin attempting to thaw a frozen pipe, you will want to open the faucet that the pipe feeds water into. Make sure to open both the hot and cold handles. This will help to alleviate pressure in the system and will allow the water to escape once you begin to thaw the pipe.

Where to Begin the Thawing Process

Regardless of the method you choose to thaw the pipe, you should always begin the thawing process near the faucet then work your way down to the blockage. This will help ensure that the melting ice and steam is able to escape through the open faucet. If you start the thawing process closer to the blockage, the melting ice could get stuck behind the blockage, creating more pressure in the pipe and increasing the chances the pipe will burst.

Tips for Thawing Exposed Pipes

If the frozen pipe is located in an area you can readily access, you have several options for attempting to thaw the pipe. You should continue to apply the heat until the water escaping from the faucet returns to full strength. Here are four options for thawing an exposed pipe.

- ***Hair Dryer***- One of the easiest ways to thaw a pipe is by using a hair dryer. Simply turn the dryer on and point the heat at the pipe, beginning with the portion closest to the faucet. As with any electrical product, take the proper precautions and avoid coming into contact with water when operating the device.
- ***Heat Lamp or Portable Space Heater***- Another method to thaw the pipe is to use a heat lamp or [portable space heater](#). Position the device so that the heat is able to reach the frozen pipe. This indirect heat can help to quickly thaw a pipe. Again, make sure to comply with the safety measures and precautions on the device you are using. You want to make sure to place the device in an area where it will not come in contact with water.

- **Hot Towels**- Another way to thaw a frozen pipe is to wrap towels that have been dipped in hot water around the pipe. This can help to slowly thaw the blockage.
- **Electrical Heating Tape**- A final option is to apply [electrical heating tape](#) directly to the pipe. This tape distributes heat throughout the pipe. You can purchase electrical heating tape that you plug in and unplug as needed or you can purchase heating tape that shuts off on its own.

Tips for Thawing Enclosed Pipes

If the frozen pipe is located in an area that you cannot easily access, you have a couple of options for thawing the pipe.

- **Turn the Heat Up in the Property**- You can attempt to thaw the frozen pipe by increasing the temperature in the property. Turning the thermostat up may be all that is needed to allow the ice blockage to melt.
- **Infrared Lamp**- If you know where in the wall the frozen pipe is located, you can attempt to thaw the blockage by placing an infrared lamp in front of the portion of the wall where the pipe is located. The heat from the lamp may be able to penetrate the wall and allow the pipe to defrost.
- **Cut Out a Section of the Wall**- If you are comfortable doing so, you can cut out the section of the [drywall](#) in front of the frozen pipe so that you can easily access the pipe. You can then use one of the methods for thawing out an enclosed pipe listed above.

Things to Avoid

Never attempt to [thaw a pipe](#) using an open flame, such as a propane torch. This can not only damage the pipe, it can also start a fire in your property.

If the Pipe Bursts

If a frozen water pipe does burst, the first thing you should do is [shut off the main water line](#) into your property. This will prevent additional water from flowing and damaging your property. You should know where the shut-off valves are for each of your properties and for each unit. There are usually smaller shut-off valves located near sinks and toilets, but the main shut-off valve is often located near the water meter.

- **Call a Professional**- If you are unable to thaw the pipe, unable to locate the frozen pipe, do not feel comfortable thawing a pipe yourself or if a pipe bursts, you should call a professional. They will be able to remedy the problem for you.

