



Winter
Home &
Garden

Protect Your Pipes

Frozen pipes can lead to costly damage and repairs, as well as the inconvenience of being without water until your pipes thaw. After thawing, there is still a chance that your pipes can burst due to expansion.

Depending on where you live, freezing temperatures may be impossible to avoid. As a homeowner, it's up to you to protect your pipes from this expensive issue.

FALL PREVENTION

No one wants to be crawling under their house or rooting around in an unfinished basement during winter's bitter temperatures. Take some steps during the warmer weather to protect your home's pipes.

The Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety recommends that you purchase rubber or foam insulation wrap to slide over pipes in your basement or crawlspace. This will keep your pipes warm during the freezing temperatures, allowing water to flow freely.

You also can use heat tape. Wrap it around pipes that are at risk of freezing. The only downside is that this tape requires electricity. Check the manufacturer's handbook to see if you can safely use an extension cord if a nearby outlet is unavailable.

WINTER PREVENTION

Your pipes have been wrapped, and you feel confident that you took preventive steps to combat freezing. There are some additional steps you can take to further



protect your pipes.

Leave at least one faucet at your home on a slow drip. A dripping faucet will relieve pressure between your faucet and ice blockage when freezing does occur.

The kitchen sink is a good place to run a slow drip. Most

sinks have separate spigots for hot and cold water. Make sure both of these are contributing to the drip since they use separate pipes for water. This will protect each pipe.

IF YOUR PIPES FREEZE

A frozen water pipe can

sometimes be inevitable. If a pipe does freeze, call a local plumber immediately. He can professionally relieve the freeze and repair the damaged pipes, if necessary.

If your pipe actually bursts due to freezing, turn the main water supply off as soon as

possible. Before the temperatures dip too low this winter, call your water department and ask them where this main valve is located on your property. Knowing this can save you a lot of money and damage in the case of a freezing emergency.

Preventing Pests

Animals are no different from people when it comes to avoiding winter's cold temperatures. If they can find a place to keep warm and survive, they will. This puts your home at risk, but you can take preventive steps to eliminate access points.

Rodents and insects such as cockroaches and fleas are known to be disease ridden. The good news is that preventing these pests from taking over your home can be done with a few simple steps. Take some time this winter to protect your home from a costly infestation.

PREVENT ACCESS

The National Pest Management Association says that a mouse can fit into a hole the size of a dime. Look over the perimeter of your home for weak spots. A common reason for holes like these to be left in your home may be from previous cable or satellite companies.

Unused holes that were drilled to allow cables inside your home are hot spots for rodents to gain access. Fill any visible hole with silicone or foam fillers. If this seems overwhelming, call a local contractor.

KEEP A DRY HOME

High-moisture areas are another attraction for pests. Many insects rely on damp, moist conditions for survival. A termite will begin its infestation on wet wood, then spread its terror to dry wood, causing extensive damage.

While fixing a wet basement may be a costly repair, it may



be necessary to free your home of pests. You can hire a local professional to seal your basement.

If you are only experiencing water in one area of your basement, consider installing a sump pump to rid your home

of unnecessary moisture.

Small leaks under the sink can usually be fixed relatively inexpensively. If you are up against a large leak that requires new pipes, you may consider hiring a local plumber to set you up with a leak-

free system.

HIRING AN EXTERMINATOR

When choosing an exterminator, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends looking for quality and value. You also should choose

an agency that shows great knowledge in how to deal with your specific pest problem.

A good home inspection by an exterminator can give you peace of mind that every infested area is being addressed within your budget.

Understanding Rock Salt

Slippery sidewalks have been the cause of bruises, broken bones and even deaths. Your sidewalk can be a hazard spot due to ice buildup caused by freezing conditions.

Knowing how to keep your sidewalks ice-free will ensure a safe winter for you and your family.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRODUCT

There are many products on the market to deal with ice. However, some of these products can cause damage to your concrete. It's important to know which products will protect your sidewalk without hurting your property.

Here are a few of the main ice-melt products on the market today, according to Consumer Reports.

- **Sodium chloride:** The most common deicer on the market today. It is commonly called rock salt. This will quickly melt ice but also will release high levels of chloride as it dissolves. This can damage concrete or metal.

- **Calcium chloride:** Another salt used for clearing areas of ice. This type is dangerous for your skin and also



will damage concrete.

- **Potassium chloride:** This will not harm your skin and is safe for plants. This is a good option to choose if you have vegetation surrounding your sidewalk.

- **Magnesium chloride:** This is the safest salt for your concrete and vegetation. It will melt ice and snow for tem-

peratures up to -13 degrees F.

HOW SALT MELTS ICE

The way that affects your icy sidewalk is simple. The combination of salt and water has a lower freezing point than water alone.

This mixture works by turning layers of ice into water. As each layer melts, the mixture

of salt and water increases, thus increasing its effectiveness to dissolve the ice on your sidewalks.

HOW TO APPLY SALT

There are a few techniques to utilize when it comes to applying salt to your sidewalk. Just spreading it around will not give you the full effect that

these products are able to obtain.

The first step is to shovel away as much ice and snow from your sidewalk as possible. Next, apply the salt. You'll start to notice the ice begin to melt in just minutes. Once the melting process begins, shovel the area again. You should be able to remove the ice more easily.

Winter Lawn Care

When you're facing winter's cold conditions, your lawn may be the last thing on your mind. There are, however, many ways your lawn can benefit from a little winter maintenance.

Fertilizing, planting seed and even mowing during the cooler months can leave you with a beautiful landscape as spring rolls around. Be sure to protect yourself from the cold by dressing in layers and staying hydrated while working outside.

DORMANT SEEDING

Sometimes grass seed just won't cooperate during the warmer months. There are different obstacles you must face, such as constant lawn traffic or active birds that find a way to graze on your grass seed.

Dormant seeding is a term used for seeding lawns in the late fall into early spring. Seeding during the colder months allows your grass seed to dig itself deeper in the soil as the ground freezes and thaws. Your seed will grow stronger once the temperatures warm up and your seeds can germinate. Apply grass seed to desired areas before a frost or incoming snow.

MOWING TECHNIQUES

Decide on the month that you will be finished mowing for the year. This last month of your mowing season should be used to gradually cut your grass lower each cycle. By lowering your deck each time, you will allow your



grass to adjust rather than just chopping it all at once.

Also, higher grass can be a huge attraction for mice and other pests that will be looking for warmth. These pests will create nests or other nuances that can damage the lawn you spent all summer manicuring.

COLD WEATHER FERTILIZING

In warmer climates, fertilizing in late fall or early winter will give your lawn's roots an advantage by providing a sturdy base to rely on in the spring. When choosing a fertilizer, look for three numbers. The most common fertilizer is 5-10-5.

Let's use this combination as a template to understand fertilizer, as defined by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

- 5 – Represents the amount of nitrogen that is present. This promotes grass growth.

- 10 – Represents the amount

of phosphorus. This helps root strength.

- 5 – Represents the amount of potassium. Potassium promotes cell function.

If you're unsure which formula is best for your lawn to reach its highest potential, call your local landscaping company to have your lawn analyzed.

Plan for Winter Storms

Winter storms are known for causing power outages, unsafe roads and bare shelves at the local grocery stores. Be ahead of the curve by equipping your home with a winter storm preparedness kit.

A full pantry, supply of warm clothes and even a generator can make a severe winter storm easier to manage.

The American Red Cross has a list of great tips on its website to help prepare you and your family for this winter.

STOCK UP ON FOOD AND WATER

The American Red Cross recommends having at least a three-day supply of food and water. Food items should be non-perishable.

Check your local grocery store for sales on canned foods and buy them throughout the year. Canned food can last two to five years and can be a huge aide during a storm that leaves you stranded at home.

If you have a deep freeze, you can take advantage of stocking it with meats and vegetables.

NECESSARY SUPPLIES

Aside from food and water, there are many supplies you may need during a winter storm. The include:

- **Flashlights and batteries.** These will come in handy in case of a long lasting power outage.
- **Warm clothes.** Another go-to resource when facing a power outage and are unable to heat your home.



- **Extra medication.** The Red Cross recommends an extra seven days worth of medicine in case the roads prohibit you from making a trip to the pharmacy.

BUY A GENERATOR

A generator can be a literal lifesaver in the case of a power outage during a winter storm. You will be able to retain the use of your heater,

refrigerator and even a television to keep up on storm relief operations in your area.

When your area is expecting a large winter storm, stock up on the necessary fuel to

keep your generator running. Generators can run on gasoline, diesel, propane or other fuels. Be sure to keep your fuel in containers designated for whichever fuel is required.

Programmable Thermostats

If your home is equipped with an old-fashioned mechanical thermostat, it may be time to jump to the electronic, programmable style. A programmable thermostat can save you big bucks and keep your home more comfortable this winter.

A programmable thermostat allows you to program different temperatures at different times of the day. You can tell your thermostat to keep the heat down while you're gone and kick on an hour before you expect to arrive home. By allowing your furnace to work less for a portion of the day, you will save a good deal on your electricity or gas bill.

WHY UPGRADE?

The most obvious difference between an electronic and a mechanical thermostat is its interface. An electronic thermostat will feature buttons to change the temperature or set different timers. On the other hand, a mechanical thermostat will most likely only display a dial. An electronic thermostat can be an inexpensive upgrade to make your home feel more modern.

The insides of the different thermostats are what really matters. A mechanical thermostat uses two pieces of metal that are joined together. Temperature is measured by these two pieces expanding and contracting. They are usually accurate within two and five degrees.

An electronic thermostat relies on digital sensors to measure temperature and alert your furnace when the temperature needs to increase or decrease. These state-of-the-art sensors are usually accurate within one degree.

ENERGY STAR TIPS

Using a programmable thermostat can keep your home warm without



hurting your wallet. Take a look at some tips laid out by Energy Star to get the most out of your thermostat.

- Follow your device's "savings set-points" for at least 8 hours a day. A good time for this is while you are at work or sleeping.

- Find your home's comfort spot and avoid overriding the programmed

settings. Using the "hold" feature to turn the heat up uses more energy.

- Keep an eye on your batteries. Most units feature a low battery indicator. Change the batteries each year for peace of mind.

WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

It may come as no surprise that you

can control certain thermostats from a smartphone application. These advanced thermostats work well for vacation homes.

This will allow you to control the temperature from anywhere. You only need to download an app and be sure that your thermostat is connected to a Wi-Fi network.

Winterize your Mower

Some of us breathe a long sigh of relief after the last mowing of the year. Take proper steps during your mower's off-season to ensure it will be in good working order when the temperatures rise.

The worst thing you can do during your mower's time off is to leave it outside in winter's elements. It will need a warm, dry spot to be stored. A mower exposed to snow or ice over the winter will likely leave you shopping for a new one in the spring.

TREATING YOUR FLUIDS

Your mower will likely be sitting dormant this winter. This gives any leftover gas in the tank plenty of time to gum up your carburetor. You may find your mower impossible to start in the spring if the gasoline is left untreated.

If you are unable to run your mower free of gas during your last use, you need to add a fuel stabilizer to the tank. Read the instructions on the back of the bottle to add the perfect amount for your machine. Untreated gas can go bad in as little as 30 days.

Just like a car, you also want to change the oil in a mower. Your mower's dipstick will have a "fill" line that you can use as a guide while filling. If your mower has a filter, now is a good time to change that, as well.

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CARE FOR YOUR DECK

Your mower should be given a thorough washing before putting it away for the winter. Don't forget to wash the deck.

The deck can build up a thick layer of grass clippings that stick to the underside. These clippings will retain moisture and can lead to early rusting of your mower. Scrape these clippings off, then wipe the deck with an old towel.

While you are cleaning the deck, uninstall the blades. Each season you should sharpen or replace your blades to avoid poor performance. Use a sharpening stone and lubricate the blade with an anti-rusting lubricant.

BATTERY CARE

Your riding lawn mower will have a battery that needs a little maintenance throughout the winter. Unlike a car, a lawn mower batteries don't fully recharge while running.

You should remove your battery and place it on a trickle charger for the winter. Keep it out of the cold to maximize its lifespan.

