



FALL & WINTER WATER TIPS! HOW TO KEEP YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEMS FROM BECOMING A COSTLY LIABILITY AND YOUR PIPES FROM FREEZING

Every Fall as the weather cools, the City of Bend receives many phone calls asking for the best ways to prepare irrigation systems and homes and businesses for freezing weather. In addition to protecting your house pipes from freezing, many irrigation systems are still operating until they can be shut off, blown out and winterized safely by licensed professionals. Until that happens, freezing nights and mornings can turn irrigation overspray into dangerous ice hazards for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. In addition to the safety concerns, much water and money can be saved as plant water needs are drastically reduced when weather turns cold.

As Freezing Weather Hits

SAFETY FIRST – FREEZING OVERSPRAY PRESENTS DANGER!

- Carefully check your irrigation system and turn off or adjust all irrigation run times and spray patterns to avoid creating overspray where dangerous ice could form in the morning or evenings until your system is winterized and turned off for the season. Once freezing weather hits, most plants become dormant and their water requirements are low. Do your part to reduce the potential for accidents and liability caused by ice from your irrigation system that can form on sidewalks, streets and pathways.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS

- Shut-off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems including the backflow prevention device on the irrigation system. Some systems require blowing the system out with compressed air from a large compressor. Beginning in January of 2010, when paying for winterization of you landscape system, a new Oregon law **REQUIRES** use of a licensed landscaping business with the proper equipment and training to avoid potential damage to both your irrigation system and the public water system. Though do-it-yourselfers will still be allowed, following proper procedures to prevent blowing contaminated water backwards into the drinking water system is a public health risk. We recommended checking with the Oregon Landscape Contractors Board, lcb.info@state.or.us, or call them at 503-986-6561 to verify that the landscaping business is properly licensed with either an “All-Phase plus Backflow” or “Irrigation Only plus Backflow” license and learning how to “winterize safely”.
- Caulk around pipes where they enter the house and close all foundation vents. This will stop cold winter air from blowing into your house. Open foundation vents are probably the greatest cause of frozen or split water pipes. You will not only protect your pipes, but you may also reduce your winter heating needs.
- Be sure to remember to open the foundation vents again in the spring to prevent dry rot.

- Protect outside pipes and faucets. For newer homes, the outside hose bibs are frost free, meaning that the shut off valve is actually located deep inside the insulated wall. If you are not sure if the hose bib is frost free, when you turn it off and water continues to drain for a few seconds, this is a good indication that the hose bib is frost-free. If you are not sure or if you do not have a frost-free hose bib, then you will need to wrap the hose bib with newspapers or rags covered with plastic, fiberglass, or molded foam-insulating covers to wrap the faucet. Molded foam insulating covers are available at most plumbing and hardware stores. In some homes, the outside faucet may have a separate shut-off in the basement or crawl space. If you do have a separate valve for outside faucets, shut it off. Then go outside and turn on the faucets to drain water from the line.
- Disconnect garden hoses from the faucets; this prevents faucets from trapping water and freezing them. With our Central Oregon winter climate it is a good idea to not only drain the garden hoses, but also store them inside a protected area. This will make them last longer.
- Know where your main water shut-off valve is outside of your home. Typically they are located 18-inches from the foundation wall where the water line enters the building. It is very important to know where this valve is located because if a pipe bursts anywhere in the house – kitchen, bath, basement, or crawl space – *this valve turn will turn it off*. Be sure everyone in the family knows where it is and what it does. Remember that in Central Oregon the snow can pile up in the yard, so use a snow stake *painted blue* to mark the location of the shut-off valve. This will allow you and others to find the valve quickly in an emergency.
- During regular business hours, if there is a leak and you cannot find the shut-off valve, call the water service line 388-5515. After hours please call 317-3000.

INSIDE YOUR HOME

- Wrap all pipes in unheated areas. Wrapping will protect pipes from freezing. Check your house for pipes in unheated areas such as the crawl space, attic, garage or basement.

Use insulating tape or molded pipe sleeves and wrap it over the entire length of exposed pipe. Cover all valves, pipe-fittings, etc. with insulating tape or fiberglass insulation.

- Shut off and drain your water system if you are leaving home for an extended period. Be sure to turn off the water heater before draining the system.
- Turn off the main water shut-off valve, then go through the house and turn on all faucets, sinks, tubs, showers, etc., and flush the toilets. Set your thermostat to 55 degrees. Ask yourself what might happen if your source of heat goes off due to a storm when you're not home.

DURING FREEZING WEATHER

- When leaving the house for an extended time, or if you live in an older home, consider opening cabinet doors in the kitchen and bathrooms. Water lines supplying the kitchen or bathrooms are frequently located next to outside walls. Any air leaks in the siding or

insulation can cause these pipes to freeze. Leaving these cabinet doors open when the temperature is below freezing allows pipes behind the cabinets to get more heat.

IF YOUR PIPES FREEZE

- Thaw the lines safely. If you know where the lines are frozen, you can attempt to thaw them with a hair dryer set on low heat. Wave the dryer back and forth along the frozen area. Thawing won't be fast, but it will be safe. **DO NOT LEAVE THE PIPES UNATTENDED.**
- **DON'T USE an OPEN FLAME TO THAW FROZEN WATER LINES.** It may be fast, but could catch the house on fire.
- **DON'T USE AN ELECTRIC ARC WELDER TO THAW FROZEN WATER LINES.** This also causes fire!
- When home plumbing is frozen, there is often water available at one faucet. Please check to see if water is available at one of the faucets. If there is no water at all, the problem may be in the street. For assistance, please call 317-3000 day or night.

IF YOUR PIPES ARE BROKEN

- **SHUT OFF THE WATER AND TURN OFF YOUR WATER HEATER.**
- If you are unable to find the shut-off valve, or have water leaking in the house from a broken pipe, we can help you shut off the water. **Call our 24-hour emergency number 317-3000 for assistance.**
- To repair the broken pipe, you may want to call a plumber.

Remember, the best tip of all is to protect your home before the winter weather hits. By winterizing your home now, you can prevent your home from the damage and inconvenience of frozen water pipes.

WaterWise – Water Isn't All You Save

Additional Information may be obtained at the City of Bend Web Site, www.ci.bend.or.us or calling the recorded hotline at 317-3002