Skagit PUD
PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT

PIPELINE

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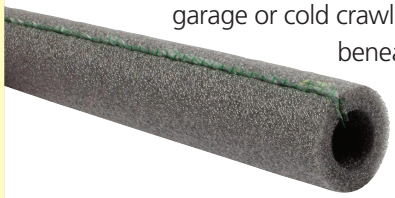
NEWSLETTER FOR SKAGIT PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT CUSTOMERS

Winter Plumbing Woes: How to Prevent Freezing and Burst Pipes

Every winter, many homeowners face the expense and inconvenience of frozen water pipes. But you can cross that off your list of winter worries by taking a few simple precautions.

Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses. Detaching the hose allows water to drain from the pipe. Otherwise, a single hard, overnight freeze can burst either the faucet or the pipe it's connected to.

Insulate pipes or faucets in unheated areas. If you have pipelines in an unheated garage or cold crawl space beneath the house, wrap the water pipes before temperatures plummet. Hardware or building supply stores have good pipe wrapping and materials available.



Foam pipe insulation helps prevent pipes from freezing in the winter.

Consider installing "heat tape" or similar materials on exposed water pipes. These are relatively easy to install, and hardware or building supply stores have many brands to fit almost any need. Use only UL-listed products and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Seal off access doors, air vents, and cracks. Repair broken basement windows. Winter winds whistling through overlooked openings can quickly freeze exposed water pipes. However, don't plug air vents your furnace or water heater needs for good combustion.

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Protecting Outdoor Plumbing Fixtures

OUTDOOR PLUMBING FIXTURES, such as hose bibs and irrigation systems, are particularly vulnerable to winter weather. To protect them, disconnect hoses and drain any remaining water. Consider installing insulated covers on outdoor faucets to shield them from the cold. If you have an irrigation system, turn off the water supply and blow out any remaining water with compressed air to prevent freezing.

An outdoor faucet cover provides peace of mind when the temperatures drop.

DID YOU KNOW?

2025 Budget Proposed

In order to maintain and replace existing assets while ensuring clean and reliable drinking water, Skagit PUD has proposed an overall rate increase of 5% or $7.12 per billing cycle for the typical residential customer in 2025. The proposed rates would increase the average residential customer's two-month bill to $149.27, with 36% funding capital improvement projects, including replacing aging pipes, working with local jurisdictions on road projects, and line relocations for fish passage projects.

As part of the review process, the Board of Commissioners holds budget work sessions open to the public and will finalize the 2025 budget by year's end. If the proposed budget is approved, any rate increase will be in effect for all bills generated on January 1, 2025, and thereafter. The 2025 proposed budget is available on our website at SkagitPUD.org.

It's Great That Ice Floats

Usually, when solids form, atoms get closer together to create a denser material. This is why most solids sink. But solid water, or ice, is actually less dense, which is unusual. The water molecules form rings when water freezes, and all that space makes ice less dense. That's why it floats. This is great because ice floating on top of a body of water lets the rest stay liquid. If ice sank, whole oceans could freeze solid!

How to Prevent Freezing and Burst Pipes

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Keep the heat on. If you're going to be away from home for an extended period, make sure your thermostat is not set lower than 55 degrees.

Allow the faucet to drip. A dripping faucet relieves pressure on your home's water system. You can leave on only one dripping faucet, but you want to ensure it's in the right location. If you know where your water comes into your house, turn on a cold water faucet at the other end of the house to allow for water to travel through the entire system.

Find the master shutoff. It's most likely where the water line comes into your house from the street. If it's not there, it may be near the water heater or the washing machine. If a pipe bursts anywhere in the house — kitchen, bath, basement, or crawl space — this valve turns it off. So, find it now and paint it a bright red color or hang a tag on it. Be sure everyone in the house knows where it is and what it does.

What if it's too late?

What if you wake up one day to find the pipes are frozen anyway? During an extended cold spell, it could happen despite precautions.

If you think you know where the freeze-up occurred and want to try thawing it out yourself, don't under any circumstances use a torch with an open flame! The whole house could catch fire. Also, overheating a single spot can burst the pipe. Heating a soldered joint could allow it to leak or come completely apart.

The easiest tool is probably a hair dryer with a low heat setting. Wave the warm air back and forth along the pipe, not in one spot. If you don't have a hair dryer, you can wrap the frozen section with rags or towels and pour hot water over them. It's messy, but it works.

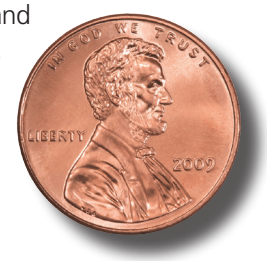
Be careful because the pipe may already be broken. It's not leaking because the water is frozen. But, when you thaw it out, water could come gushing out. Be ready to run for the master shutoff valve if necessary.

Value of Water

Rising costs affect rates

WATER is essential to our daily lives, but few people stop to consider its value and importance, especially when compared to bottled water and other everyday products.

Skagit PUD's water costs less than a penny per gallon — a genuine bargain considering the energy and expertise required to treat and deliver safe and reliable water to homes and businesses day in and day out. However, like many basic services today, the cost of treating and delivering water is increasing for several reasons.



Here are some of the factors affecting the cost of treating and delivering water:

Rising treatment costs. Increasingly stringent drinking water regulations add to the cost of providing water. Producing high-quality water requires significant investments in treatment technologies and chemicals.

Aging water infrastructure. Repairing and upgrading aging pipelines, pumps, and other facilities accounts for a significant portion of monthly water bills.

Maintaining our system through replacement and rehabilitation is critically important to preserve a good level of service, ensure adequate fire protection, minimize outages, and maintain water quality. Deferring needed maintenance can result in expensive system repairs.

Increasing energy costs. It takes lots of electricity to pump, treat, and deliver water. Rising costs for energy directly affect the price of providing water to you.

As a Skagit PUD customer, you get more than just a product for your money. You are getting reliable service that includes ongoing maintenance, sophisticated water quality testing and treatment, and highly trained personnel. Simply put, you are getting one of the best deals around.