

# Protect Your Home from FREEZING!

In 2020 when we had an extended cold spell like what is forecast for tomorrow through Monday, Pecan Valley 6 homes experienced serious damage from frozen and broken pipes. Those homes had certain things in common.

First, 3 of them the owner was out of town. If you have neighbors who are out of town and their home is empty, you might help them by contacting them and taking preventive measures for them.

Of the 6 of which I am aware receiving serious damage, 4 had their water heater in the attic! Attics are designed to be as cold as the outside air; they are ventilated to prevent moisture and ice from forming on the inside of the roof. But freezing attics are terrible for pipes and water heaters. The answer to this is NOT in your attic, it is in your sink!

**DO NOT LEAVE WATER DRIPPING!** That will not protect your water heater or your pipes. *You need a slow steady flow of both hot water and cold water to prevent your pipes or water heater (if it is in the attic) from freezing.* I recommend ½ gallon per minute. Start by measuring the flow of hot water, you should have one quart flow in 60 seconds, or 2 cups in 30 seconds. Then add the cold water to the same rate. This will cost about \$6 if you leave it running at this rate for 3 days.

**Your greatest vulnerability of pipes freezing are:**

- **Outside faucet on your house.** Many houses didn't have pipe breakage or flooding in their house but they went a couple of days without water because the faucet where the water enters the house froze, shutting off the flow of water to the whole house. WRAP or COVER outdoor faucets! We use faucet socks from ACE Hardware and the foam faucet covers that are sold everywhere household goods are sold.



- **Sinks, showers, or other plumbing against an outside wall.** The faucets in the idle of your house won't freeze. Faucets against an outside wall, especially a North or West outer wall during this freeze, are where your pipes are likely to freeze. Thus, these are the ones to have running. Also, leave the cabinet doors open so that the room heat will help keep your pipes inside warm.
- **Attic Plumbing.** Pipes in your attic that are exposed, need to have water running through them. We accomplish that by running the faucet as explained above which is against an outer wall at the far end of the house from the water heater. This keeps water flowing through those lines.

**What is NOT Vulnerable to freezing:** You do NOT need to worry about these or spend time trying to protect them.

**Frost-free hydrants.** Like fire hydrants, frost free hydrants do not have water inside them when they are turned off. The water drains out of them into the soil 2-3' below ground. Don't worry about these.



**Your Water Meter.** If your meter box is closed (and you haven't broken it with a lawn mower or by driving over it) then your water meter will not freeze. In SW Oklahoma, the soil 2' down remains a constant temperature around 50-55°, keeping the meter warm. If you have water running inside, then that keeps your water meter warm (about 50°) as the water flows through it.

The only water meter we've had freeze in the 8 years I've been here was one that did not have a lid on it. The wind was blowing into the box, snow accumulated in the box around the meter, and they didn't have any water running inside the house.

**Unfortunately,** because freezing is generally not a serious problem in Oklahoma, little consideration is given by homebuilders toward protecting the water pipes inside.