Winter is coming: Five water winterization tips to help customers save water and money

By Anna Nixon
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This year has been full of surprises. Broken pipes or high water bills from wasted water shouldn't be one of them. In the 2020 E Source COVID-19 Residential Survey, we asked residential utility customers how their water usage has changed during COVID-19. More than a quarter of respondents told us that they're using more water during the pandemic.



Water usage has increased during COVID-19

Before COVID-19, more than 70% of US water customer respondents spent less than $100 on their monthly water bill. During the pandemic, just over a quarter of respondents claimed that their water usage has been higher than normal.

Help your customers avoid costly damage from frozen pipes and reduce their usage this winter season with these handy tips.

Insulate pipes. If you need a jacket, your pipes probably do too. To prevent freezing, the Balance Small Business article How to Winterize Your Plumbing Pipes to Prevent Damage recommends wrapping pipes with insulation sleeves or foam pipe insulation. Don't leave gaps in the insulation and be sure to seal seams with duct tape for a perfect fit.

Locate and seal cracks. Home improvement retailer Lowe's, in the article Frozen Pipes: Prevention and Repair, suggests using weatherstripping or caulk to seal cracks and openings in walls, attics, basements, and crawlspaces. Left unfilled, these gaps can allow cold air to sneak into your house like an unwelcome holiday dinner guest and freeze your interior pipes.

Disconnect hoses and insulate exterior faucets. According to Snohomish County PUD's tip sheet Protecting Your Water Pipes in Cold Weather (PDF), drain and remove all hoses from the exterior of your home and consider storing them inside throughout the winter to help them last longer. Then insulate exterior faucets and backflow devices with newspaper, rags, or other insulating material before covering them with plastic and securing them with string or wire. Pro tip: Add a festive touch by using the holiday-themed ribbon you'll inevitably find while searching for cracks in your basement or attic.

Winterize sprinkler and irrigation systems. Your grass will go dormant during the winter, and so should your sprinkler system. Shut off the water supply to your sprinklers or irrigation system and allow it to drain completely. The City of Fort Collins Utilities suggests hiring a professional to force water out of the system using compressed air. For more tips, see the utility's Sprinkler System Winterization page.

Clean out gutters. Direct Energy's Tips for Winterizing Your Home: Winter Preparation Checklist for Safety and Efficiency includes advice about ensuring gutters are free of debris to prevent ice dams from forming and causing melting snow to seep into your home. The Grange Insurance article 10 tips to winterize your home suggests installing gutter guards to keep debris from collecting in the first place. Santa's reindeer will thank you.

For more tips, to learn more about our findings from the COVID-19 Residential Survey, or to get more information about our new customer experience offering for water utilities, contact us.

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