

## Meter Box Maintenance

Your water meter is in a water meter box typically located by your front property line. Knowing the location of your water meter is very important and lets your utility quickly access the water meter and shut-off valve in case of a leak or water emergency.



Shrubs, planters and other landscaping can obscure access to the water meter. You can help maintain access to the water meter box by:

- Keeping items off the meter box
- Trimming the grass around the meter box
- Keeping shrubbery and other landscaping from obstructing a clear and easy access to the meter box
- Shoveling plowed snow off of the meter box
- Keeping the meter box closed during cold weather to reduce the chances of freezing

## Taking a Winter Vacation?

If you plan to be away from your home for an extended period of time during the winter:

- Call your utility to have your water service turned off
- Drain your system
- Turn off the water supply lines to your clothes washer
- Turn off your hot water tank
- Ensure all vent openings are closed off

## Emergency Preparedness

Water is essential for survival. Be prepared for the unexpected and store enough water for up to three days for each person in your home.

- Use 6 two-liter soda pop bottles per person
- Label it “drinking water” and date it
- Store in a cool, dark place
- Change your water every six months

Visit Whatcom Unified Emergency Management’s webpage: [www.whatcomready.org/preparedness](http://www.whatcomready.org/preparedness) or call 360-676-6681



For more information:  
Call 778-7700 or Email [askpw@cob.org](mailto:askpw@cob.org)  
City of Bellingham Public Works

# Preparing Your Water Service for Cold Weather

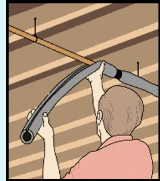


City of Bellingham Public Works Department



## Cold Snap Checklist

1. Eliminate drafts: **close and insulate** vents with rigid foam; **caulk and seal** any openings near your water pipes.
2. **Insulate** pipes.
3. **Drain** outside pipes and faucets.
4. **Cover or insulate** exterior faucets.
5. **Disconnect** or winterize garden hose and irrigation systems, pools and spas according to manufacturer's recommendations.



## The Problem with Frozen Pipes

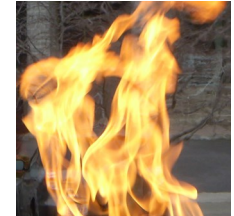
Water expands as it freezes. This expansion puts tremendous pressure on whatever is containing it, including metal or plastic pipes. No matter the "strength" of the pipe, expanding water can cause pipes to break.

Pipes that freeze most frequently are those that are exposed to severe cold, like outdoor hose bibs, swimming pool supply lines, water sprinkler lines and water supply pipes in unheated interior areas like basements and crawl spaces, attics, garages or kitchen cabinets. Also, pipes that run against exterior walls that have little or no insulation are subject to freezing.

Frozen water pipes can stop water service and be expensive to repair or replace and homeowners are responsible for ensuring their houses are protected from the occasional cold snap.

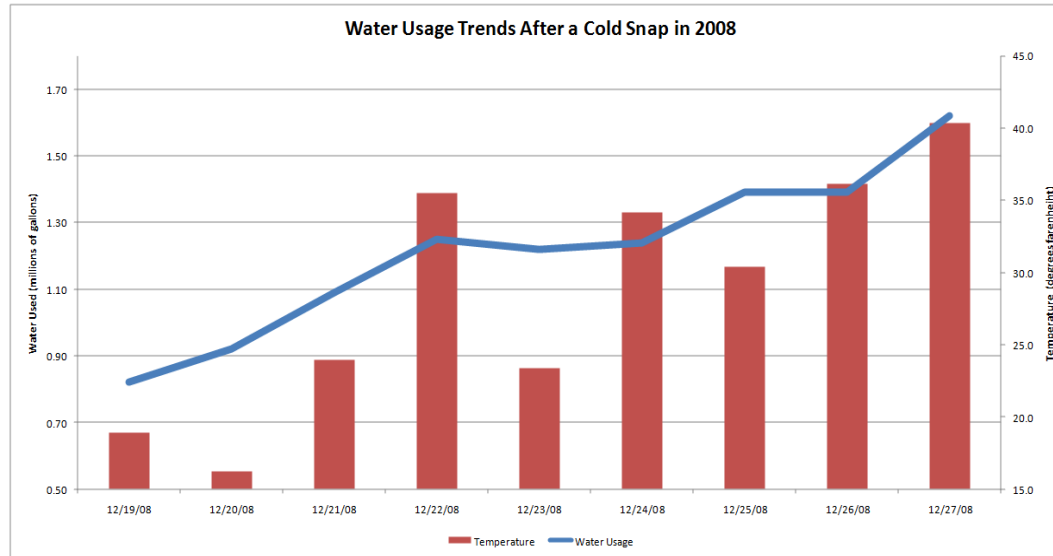
## If Your Pipes Freeze.....

- Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with a torch or open flame
- Place a warm towel or rag around the pipe or try a hair dryer on a low setting to thaw out the frozen pipe



## If Your Pipes Break.....

- During business hours, call 778-7700 to have the water shut off at the meter
- After business hours, call 778-7855 to have the water shut off



## Cold Snap Water Use Trends

When a water utility experiences below freezing temperatures followed by warmer temperatures, water use doubles as a result of broken, frozen pipes thawing out.

The graph to the left reflects what happened to a water utility's water usage after a long cold snap in 2008. Water usage doubled and almost met the peak day for that year!

