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TMWA Urges Residents to Winterize Pipes

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The colder the weather gets, the higher your chances are of having your pipes freeze. That's why experts say now is the time to winterize your house, if you haven't already.

Andy Gebhardt is the Manager of Customer Services for the **Truckee Meadows Water Authority**. He says there are some easy things you can do to avoid problems around the house, or face the consequences. "It's time, it's money, and you're going to have to call a plumber," Gebhardt said. "It's going to cost you hundreds and maybe thousands of dollars."

One of the most common mistakes people make is waiting too long to turn off sprinkler systems. "They don't winterize their irrigation system, we get a couple of good freezes, and then boom," Gebhardt said. "The pipes are breaking and they're frantic."

TMWA is hoping people can avoid these problems, simply by turning the sprinkler valve off and draining the system.

Broken pipes don't just cost time and money. They can also waste a lot of water. "Thousands of gallons," Gebhardt said. "We've had leaks and breaks that have doubled somebody's bill, sent 30,000 gallons until they are finally able to figure it out."

All hoses should also be disconnected from exterior water faucets, so remaining water in the faucet drains out completely.

"Someone figures 'Well, I've turned off the water. I should be fine. The faucet's off.' Well, that line is charged," Gebhardt said.

It's also a good idea to insulate water heater pipes, especially if they're in an unheated garage. Pipes often break, leaving driveways under a couple inches of water, and plumbers working around the clock.

You can also protect pipes in your crawl space by keeping cold air out. That's why you should close all exterior vents. "If you have a couple of open holes and that north wind starts howling through there, that will freeze those pipes and they'll break underneath your house," Gebhardt said. "Which causes a lot of heartache and discontent."

If you're not going to be home for awhile, it's a good idea to keep your thermostat set at 55-degrees to keep pipes warm.

It's also important to know where your water shutoff valve is, and have a good plumber just in case.

Written by Paul Nelson

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