American Water Newsroom

Virginia American Water Urges Customers to Prepare for Cold Weather

Tips to Protect Pipes Before Freezing Temperatures

ALEXANDRIA, Va., Nov. 20, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- As winter approaches, Virginia American Water reminds customers to prepare their home and pipes, providing handy tips to help avoid costly repairs and unwanted stress from frozen pipes.

"Customers should prepare for frigid temperatures by taking simple steps to protect their pipes from freezing," said **Charlie Piekanski, Vice President of Operations, Virginia American Water**. "By taking proactive measures, you can help ensure you and your loved ones stay safe and comfortable when the temperature drops."

You can prepare now by taking the following steps:

- **Know how to shut off your water:** Locate your main water shut-off valve. In many homes, it is located near the water meter or close to where the water pipe enters the home. Hang an I.D. tag on the valve so it can be found quickly during an emergency. Download a tag to print here.
- **Test your main water shut-off valve:** Once located, test the shut-off valve by closing it. Once completely closed, check sinks and other water fixtures to ensure the shut-off valve is working properly.
    - Ball valves generally only require a quarter turn to close.
    - Gate valves are generally closed by turning the handle clockwise and should turn easily.
    - If the valve does not close easily, it may need to be serviced.
    - Bonus: While you are there, check your incoming water service line material! Virginia American Water is working with customers to identify their service line material. If it is found to be made of lead or galvanized steel, they will be replaced in the future. Visit our website for information.
- **Check sprinkler or irrigation systems:** Make sure everything is turned off and fully drained.
- **Eliminate sources of cold air near water lines:** Check for pipes in areas that might be prone to freezing, such as crawl spaces, unheated rooms, basements, garages, and exterior walls. Fix drafty windows, insulate walls around pipes and plug drafts around doors.
- **Protect your pipes:** Where pipes are exposed to cold, wrap them with insulation or heat tape (even fabric or newspaper can help).

When temperatures stay below freezing:

- **Give pipes a helping hand:** If pipes run through cabinets or vanities, open the doors to let warmer room temperatures flow in.
- **Keep water moving through the pipes:** Allow a small trickle of water to run. The cost of the extra water is typically lower than the cost of repairing a broken pipe.

If pipes freeze:

- **Shut off the water immediately:** Do not attempt to thaw pipes without turning off the main water shut-off valve.
- **Thaw a frozen pipe by warming the air around it:** Use a hair dryer, space heater or hot water. Do not leave space heaters unattended and avoid using kerosene heaters or open flames.

- **Once pipes are thawed:** Slowly turn the water back on. Check pipes and joints for any cracks or leaks potentially caused by freezing.

When customers are away from home, consider the following:

- **Set your thermostat** at 55 degrees to prevent freezing.
- **Have a friend, relative or neighbor regularly check the property** to help ensure the heat is working and the pipes have not frozen.
- **Consider purchasing a freeze alarm.** The alarm will call a user-selected phone number if the inside temperature drops below 45 degrees.

Find cold weather protection tips here: https://amwater.com/corp/Customers-and-Communities/Wise-Water-Use/cold-weather-protection.

About American Water
American Water (NYSE: AWK) is the largest regulated water and wastewater utility company in the United States. With a history dating back to 1886 and celebrating 140 years in 2026, We Keep Life Flowing® by providing safe, clean, reliable and affordable drinking water and wastewater services to approximately 14 million people with regulated operations in 14 states and on 19 military installations. American Water's approximately 7,000 talented professionals leverage their significant expertise and the company's national size and scale to achieve excellent outcomes for the benefit of customers, employees, investors and other stakeholders.

For more information, visit amwater.com and join American Water on LinkedIn, Facebook, X and Instagram.

About Virginia American Water
Virginia American Water, a subsidiary of American Water, is the largest regulated water company in the state, providing safe, clean, reliable and affordable water and wastewater services to approximately 384,000 people. For more information, visit www.virginiaamwater.com and join Virginia American Water on Facebook and X.

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