PLUMBER PROS — GUIDE

Prevent frozen pipes before cold weather

Find exposed pipes, review insulation and keep a clear plan for cold periods.

Updated November 10, 2026

Look for water pipes in unheated spaces before cold weather arrives. Travelers identifies basements, crawl spaces, attics, garages and cabinets as places to check. It also flags pipes against poorly insulated exterior walls. Its guidance was fetched on 2026-11-10.

Walk through the property

Make a list of exposed pipe runs. Note cold air openings and places that are hard to reach. Ask a plumber which pipes need insulation or another protection method. Tell the plumber about any past freeze. Keep photos and the work record for later checks.

Prepare the occupied space

Travelers advises insulating hot and cold water pipes. It describes pipe sleeves and listed heat tape or cable as possible products. Ask about the correct product for the pipe and follow the product instructions. Do not improvise an electrical heating arrangement.

During cold periods, Travelers advises keeping garage doors closed where pipes are present. It also suggests opening cabinet doors to let warmer air reach plumbing and letting at-risk taps drip. Move hazardous household products out of reach before opening cabinets around children or pets.

If you will be away

The Travelers page advises keeping home heat at a minimum of 55 degrees Fahrenheit. That figure is the insurer's published prevention advice, checked 2026-11-10. It is not a guarantee against freezing in every building. Ask someone to check the property and agree what they should do if heat fails or a leak appears.

Plan access and a response

Know where the main water shutoff is. Ask a plumber to show you how to use it if you are unsure. Keep the plumber's number and property manager's number accessible. Tell other occupants where to find the plan. For a business, assign someone to check unused areas and report loss of heat.

If water stops flowing

Tell the plumber which taps are affected and whether you can see a leak. Ask for immediate

instructions. Do not use a flame to heat a pipe. Do not approach water near electrical equipment. A damaged or inaccessible pipe is a reason to get professional help, not to increase the heat with an improvised tool.

After the incident, ask the plumber to explain what failed and what protection is appropriate at that location. Update the prevention list instead of relying only on the last repair.

Sources

Checked 2026-11-10. These pages can change.

- Travelers: How to Help Prevent Frozen Pipes, accessed 2026-11-10.

Frequently asked questions

Will leaving the heat on prevent every freeze?

No prevention step is a guarantee. Review exposed pipes and past trouble spots with a plumber before cold weather.