



# COLD WEATHER EMERGENCIES

**W**ith the arrival of cold weather, invariably each year the drop in temperature gives rise to weather-related emergencies.

## FROZEN WATER PIPES

One of the most common winter home emergencies is a broken water pipe. Some precautions can be taken to avoid frozen pipes:

- Outside pipes, those in areas subject to freezing and through-the-wall faucets, should be shut off and drained.
- Pipes in cold areas that cannot be turned off should be well insulated, but avoid the use of electrical or "heat" tape. Such tape is not intended for extended use and may increase your chance of a fire.

- In bitter cold weather, leave an inside faucet trickling. (Running water is less likely to freeze.)

Knowing how to isolate a broken pipe and turning off water valves can reduce damage should a pipe freeze or burst.

Frozen pipes should be thawed out slowly. Never apply an open flame or a torch. Try using a hand-held hair dryer. If this doesn't work, your best bet may be to have a professional thaw your pipes.

Other than considerations for life safety, such as wet electrical circuits or damaged utilities, there is very little the fire department can do to assist with broken pipes. Severe water damage may be best handled by a water damage restoration specialist.

## HEATING DEVICES

Burns and fires associated with portable heaters, fireplaces

## DOWNED POWER LINES

Another common winter hazard is downed power lines due to ice storms. Any downed wire should be considered *live and dangerous* and must be avoided.

An accompanying problem may be the temporary loss of power. Planning in advance may make this inconvenience easier to cope with.



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and furnaces are a major concern. Any heating device must

have care and maintenance to operate properly. Annual cleaning, inspection and maintenance by trained professionals is a must for safe operation. Plenty of clear space—at least 36 inches—should be provided for all heating devices. Fireplaces and portable heaters should be constantly attended when in use. Never go to bed or leave home while either is still burning, and always follow all manufacturer safety recommendations.

**C**old weather can present problems. A little careful planning, preparedness and common sense can help prevent many of these problems and make your winter a lot safer.

