

BEWARE of WINTER DAMAGE !

At the eve of the winter, BELGAQUA, the Belgian Federation for the Water Sector, warns all water users for the possible damage due to frost on their domestic water installations and gives advice on the precautions to protect the watermeter and the piping.

The repair costs of a frozen watermeter will always be charged to the customer. Also, pipe or device burst may cause considerable damage in the house.

Damage due to cold weather usually occurs after a sudden fall of the temperature below - 5 °Celsius, but even during lasting moderate cold weather. Thermal insulation around the watermeter can be useful to protect against icy winds, but is not sufficient to keep the meters safe during long periods of freezing.

In particular, the installations where water is at rest or are scarcely used are most at risk. Owners of week-end houses or second residence where there is no water use during the winter are advised to empty completely the installation before the winter.

What are the preventive actions ?

- before the winter:
 - * Check if the control valve at the entry of the installation shuts tightly. If it is not the case, contact your water supplier.
 - * Check if the domestic installation can be emptied. The purge taps just after the watermeter may not be blocked.
- Make sure that all the rooms into which there are water pipes are kept at a temperature above à 0°C.
- if it is not possible to heat a room exposed to freezing, the installation of a heating ribbon is recommended. The ribbon must be swirled around the pipe and covered by an isolating cap. Precautions must be taken with plastic pipes to avoid excessive heating. Such a heating ribbon must be installed according to strict conditions and with appropriate material to be purchased from a specialist reseller as a complete kit containing the ribbon, the thermal insulation and the thermostat. It must be connected to an electrical connector with appropriate earthing.
- Outdoor taps and pipes located into a outside wall need special attention. If feasible, empty them.

What can I do when the pipes are frozen in spite of all ?

- If there is no water in the whole building, this means that the service pipe has probably been frozen. It can be de-iced with a hair-dryer (**do never use flames !**), starting from the control valve at the entry of the house. Move patiently the hair dryer back and forth. The water will then slowly flow again. Take care of the taps which remained opened end do not over-heat plastic pipes.

- if only part of the domestic piping is frozen, starting from the service tap and moving back towards the control valve at the entry of the house.
- In case it is not possible to melt all the frozen parts, damage could appear during thaw. To avoid any bad surprise, it is safer to shut the control valve before leaving the building or go to sleep.
- When the installation has been unfrozen, open **gently** the control valve, as it is possible that some piping has been damaged and leakage could appear. When everything has been checked, you may open the control valve completely.

Keep in mind that the major damage always happens during thaw. Do not wait to inform your water supplier of any damage to the water meter or the control valves.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE !

Free advice is given during work hours by calling 0800-14 6 14 (within Belgium only)

