

# ***Saving water pipes during winter power outages***



If you lose electrical power and you suspect it will be off for several days in winter weather, you need to protect your water pipes.

North Dakota State University

Extension Service agricultural engineers Tom Scherer, Vern Hofman and Ken Hellevang have this advice to keep the pipes from freezing:

- \* Shut off the water at the main shut-off valve in your house. If you are on a city or rural water system. If you have a well, turn off the power to the well pump. Drain pressure tanks associated with well pumps.
- \* Turn on all faucets and flush toilets to get as much water out of the water lines as possible. A faucet at the lowest level in the plumbing is especially helpful in draining the pipes. Use air pressure to blow water out of pipes if possible.
- \* Drain the water heater by opening the faucet at the bottom of the heater tank.
- \* Pour RV antifreeze down drains and sinks and into toilet bowls and tanks because some water will remain in pipes and toilets. Have RV antifreeze on hand as part of your emergency preparedness kit.
- \* Disconnect the clothes washer hoses from their faucets, drain the water and pour RV antifreeze into the hoses

and bottom of the washer. If you have a generator, use it to run the washer briefly to circulate the antifreeze. The antifreeze may not prevent freezing damage if it isn't circulated.

- \* If possible, disconnect the dishwasher from its water supply, drain the water, pour RV antifreeze into the bottom of the dishwasher and, using a generator, run the dishwasher briefly to circulate the antifreeze. Check the owners manual for specific recommendations on your model.

Hofman says you can use automobile antifreeze if you don't have the RV variety, but the RV type is preferable because it is designed for use in household pipes.

During the recent power outages throughout the region, some homeowners chose to turn on their faucets and continually run a small amount of water through the pipes. The three experts say that flow of water could overwhelm septic systems.

Hellevang recommends that when the power outage is over, homeowners should have a professional, such as a plumber, check their pipes if they are worried that water may have frozen in them and caused damage to the pipes.

