



# NOW IS THE TIME TO WINTERIZE YOUR PLUMBING

*A Reminder That Winter is Coming Courtesy of the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (TSBPE)*

If you owned a home or business in the state of Texas during February 2021, you probably dealt with some plumbing issues in the wake of Winter Storm Uri, the historic deep freeze that left most of the state frozen and without power for nearly a week. While this coming Winter may not be quite as dramatic, there are several precautions every home and business owner can take now to mitigate disaster when the temperature drops.

## Always Hire a *Licensed* Plumber

As the deep freeze unfolded last February, the [Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners \(TSBPE\)](#) took unprecedented measures to increase the number of qualified plumbers available across the state. As a result, **there are currently more qualified plumbers available to work in Texas than ever before.** And a current Texas plumbing license guarantees not just a certain level of skill, but also that the license holder is up-to-date on Texas plumbing code and laws. To search for a licensed plumber near you, go to [tsbpe.texas.gov](https://tsbpe.texas.gov) and look for the “Interactive Plumber Locating Map.”

## Insulate Water Pipes

Structures built for Texas heat are often left uninsulated in peculiar places. Dave Yelovich, TSBPE Board Member and home builder, recommends that you “stick your head in your attic. If your house was built before 1990 there’s a chance that the water pipes were run above or below your insulation. Any exposed pipe in an unheated space can burst in a deep freeze. As a bonus, insulating your pipes will increase your energy efficiency and could lower your monthly electric bill.”

## Replace Foundation/Attic Vents

A water pipe’s worst enemy is freezing air. David Butler, Responsible Master Plumber and Plumbing Manager for Milestone Electric Co. in Dallas/Ft. Worth, recommends that all home owners and house managers “do a complete survey of the perimeter of your house and look for places through which air might flow. Unsealed windows and doors are obvious culprits, but when was the last time you checked your foundation and attic vents?” And he’s right: missing vent covers were responsible for a large percentage of burst pipes in Texas attics and basements last February.

(Please note - vented crawl spaces and attics should always have air flowing through them - even in the Winter. This is why homes are insulated between those spaces. Failure to properly vent attics and crawl spaces can lead to moisture issues and mold.)

## Locate Your Main Shutoff Valve

Most main valves in Texas are located outside and away from the structure. Locate your main shutoff valve and store the valve key (the tool that’s used to turn the valve itself) in an obvious and easily accessible place. Then if you know a freeze is coming and have the flexibility to do so, you can shut the whole thing down. Don’t forget to run all the faucets to purge the remaining water from the system; no water in the pipes means no ice in the pipes!

## HOW TO VET A PLUMBER

When choosing a plumber be sure to ask for their license number and then check it using the [TSBPE’s public license search](#). The License Detail page includes not just license status but also disciplinary and continuing education history. **Do not hire a plumber if their license is not current and in good standing.**

Above all else, the key to preparing for another wild Winter is to get out ahead of it. “You have to be pro-active,” Yelovich concludes, “recognize when, where and how your pipes will likely freeze *while it’s still hot outside*, and then take action.”