

Cold weather a signal to pay attention to pipes

By Pam Emmerich

With the Tahoe region engulfed in a bitter cold snap, the North Tahoe Public Utility District would like to remind residents to take precautions to make sure their homes, especially their water lines, are prepared for the cold.

- If you know that pipes in your home freeze, make sure to leave them running.
- Never completely shut the heat off when you are not at home and leave cabinet doors open to allow air to circulate.
- All homeowners should have a water shut off valve installed in the home that will allow you to completely shut off the water to your home when you will not be home for any length of time. The shut off should also allow the water system in your home to completely drain leaving no water in the pipes.
- Most important, make sure your water district has your most current contact phone number so we can reach you in the event of a water emergency. There is nothing worse than seeing water pouring out of a house or garage and having to send a letter to notify the homeowner, instead of calling them.
- Finally, if you see water running out of a neighbor's garage, down a driveway or anywhere else you don't typically see running water, call your local water district.

During the winter of 2009-10, a significant cold spell in the region resulted in more than 60 homes having significant water damage. Home service breaks showed usage in the 20,000 to 40,000 gallon range with several homes in the 100,000 to 200,000 gallon range. As you can imagine, that amount of water

running through a home will cause significant damage.

For reference, during the winter with no landscape irrigation, domestic (home) water usage usually runs well under 10,000 gallons per month. The district's National Avenue Water Treatment Plant was producing 200,000 to 300,000 gallons more per day than would be expected this time of year.

Pam Emmerich works for the North Tahoe Public Utility District.