



# ***Routt County Office of Emergency Management***

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Date: December 4, 2013

Time: 1530 Hours

### **FREEZING WEATHER AHEAD... DON'T LET YOUR PIPES BURST!**

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Routt County, Colorado – Far more than an inconvenience, winter weather in Colorado can be a truly dangerous and oftentimes deadly affair.

With below freezing temperatures in the forecast this week, the Routt County Office of Emergency Management would like to remind businesses and residents to take the necessary precautions to protect pipes and fire suppression systems. Fire suppression systems can freeze when the temperature drops, which can lead to unfortunate and preventable fire loss. Frozen pipes in homes and businesses can also burst and cause extensive, costly water damage. There are some simple steps you can take to help ensure the pipes in and around your home or business are ready for the cold temperatures:

#### **Commercial Property Reminders**

- Have your fire suppression systems properly maintained by a licensed contractor to ensure working order and avoid do-it-yourself repairs.
- Conduct a physical inspection of all buildings and areas protected by fire sprinklers before the cold weather arrives.
- Know how to operate the sprinkler system and shut down the system in the event a pipe bursts.
- Provide adequate heat to all affected areas by extension of the existing heating system rather than other means such as space heaters or other localized heating appliances.
- Do not use torches or other open flame devices to thaw pipes or other equipment.

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- Do not use temporary heating equipment such as salamanders and other un-vented portable fuel-burning heaters. These, as well as portable electric heaters, present unnecessary fire and health hazards.
- Keep doors, windows and vents closed when not in use and repair broken windows, doors and cracks in the walls to prevent cold air from entering.
- Insulate pipes that may be exposed to outside temperatures.
- Pay particular attention to piping in attics, entries, penthouses, stairways, under floor areas, above ceilings, shipping, and similar out-of-the-way areas where low temperatures might occur.
- If the sprinkler system is to be exposed to freezing temperatures, such as when a buildings heating system is planned to be shut off or interrupted for a period of time, precautionary measures must be taken. The system's water may have to be drained and a fire watch established or temporary heating provided. Never shut off a system without notifying the fire department that the system is out of service.

### **Residential Property Reminders**

- Check around the home for other areas where water supply lines are located in unheated areas. Look in the basement, crawl space, attic, garage, and under kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Both hot and cold water pipes in these areas should be insulated.
- Consider installing specific products made to insulate water pipes like a "pipe sleeve" or installing UL-listed "heat tape," "heat cable," or similar materials on exposed water pipes.
- Properly drain automatic landscaping sprinkler systems.
- Disconnect all hoses from water supplies around the outside of your home.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing.
- When the weather is very cold outside, let the cold water drip from the faucet served by exposed pipes. Running water through the pipe – even at a trickle – helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.

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- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55° F.
- If you have a home fire sprinkler system, have it evaluated by a professional fire sprinkler company to make sure the system is operational. Systems containing antifreeze should be inspected annually.

This is also an excellent time for all individuals, families, businesses, schools, and media outlets to renew their winter storm preparedness plans. Bob Struble, Director of the Routt County Office of Emergency Management said, "Coloradoans have a responsibility to themselves, their loved ones, friends, neighbors and fellow citizens to prepare for the possible impacts of severe weather. There are a number of resources available to keep us prepared and informed as the snow and ice return to Colorado."

The [National Weather Service](#) maintains a comprehensive [Winter Weather links page](#) that provides a number of [Colorado-specific reports](#), [avalanche information](#) and [preparedness information](#). In addition to keeping up with the latest [NWS Colorado Weather Advisories/Watches and Warnings](#), you should [know what your local "sources" for emergency information, including available sms/text/email alerts, websites, local contact numbers and emails](#). These local sources will be the best contacts for specific hazard and response actions in your area or the area to which you are traveling. For specific tips on preparedness, there are some great winter preparedness checklists available online from [READYColorado](#).

The Routt County Office of Emergency Management stresses the importance of families and individuals putting together an emergency supply kit for any kind of emergency or disaster Coloradoans might face. Struble said, "Winter weather can strike quickly and abruptly. Pay attention to forecasts and heed warnings; don't take unnecessary trips during a winter storm. Make sure you have a 72-hour kit for your home and car, and realize that during large winter storms disrupted services can linger for 72 hours or longer."

Struble emphasized these key areas of severe weather preparedness:

- Ensure that you and your family members know about your surroundings and risk for specific weather. Stay informed by having multiple sources for weather alerts.
- Have an emergency plan in place, and know what to do before severe weather strikes. Exercise the plan with your family and post it in your home where visitors can see it.
- As part of tailoring your plans, consider working with others to create networks of neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers who will assist each other in an emergency. Discuss your needs and responsibilities and how people in the network can assist each other with communication, care of children, pets, specific needs like the operation of durable medical equipment, or how to inform someone with a hearing loss about impending severe weather.

Be prepared and be safe!

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Routt-County-Office-of-Emergency-Management/184997734864642?ref=hl>
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