



## SBP's Post-Freeze Clean Up and Plumbing Guide

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### Where To Begin:

- Turn off your water (see below for instructions) and begin cleanup to prevent additional damage.
- Contact your insurance company and apply for assistance from FEMA as soon as possible. Make sure to document with pictures along the way and save all receipts. You can apply to FEMA online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov), on the mobile FEMA app, or by calling 800-621-3362
- All of SBP's free resources provide easy-to-follow steps to help speed your recovery. They can be found at [sbpusa.org](https://sbpusa.org).

### Step-by-Step Guide to Finding a Leak, Turning Off the Water and Beginning Repairs:

- Locate the water main shut-off valve, if you haven't already. Typically, it will be by your inside near your water heater or outside near your water meter. (see more detail below)
- When water begins flowing again, be very quiet, walk and listen. If there is a leak, you'll likely hear a hissing sound.
- Locate the leak and turn off the water main shut-off valve.
- Once the water has been turned off, lay down a tarp below the area around the leak to minimize dust and debris.
- Take ample photos of the damage and actively leaking pipe.
- Identify the wet spots in the drywall and cut back 2 feet past the dry line on the drywall.
- Dry out the area and remove any insulation to prevent mold.
- Use a dehumidifier or fans to vent the moisture out of the area to prevent mold growth. Run the heat if you are able to do so to help the drying process.
- If mold is present, follow the steps in [SBP's Mold Remediation Guide](#) and be sure to use EPA-certified fungicide. Do not use bleach on wood or porous surfaces.
- Hire a licensed and insured plumber to make the repairs.

### What You Should Know Before You Hire a Plumber:

- Avoid these common scams:
  - Calling or knocking on your door offering plumbing services
  - Adding "extra help" to a job
  - Requiring cash payment or full payment in advance
- Protect Yourself
  - **Get everything in writing** - a breakdown of materials costs, an estimated time to complete the repair with an agreed-upon per hour rate. (\$100 per hour is an average fair rate) Note: copper pipe will be more expensive than PVC pipe to repair.



- Protect Yourself, continued
  - **Make sure the plumber shows you the specific leaks/damage** - you shouldn't need to replace all of your plumbing or your water heater
  - **Pay in installments** - never pay all of the cost in advance, do not pay with cash
  - **Always get a receipt**
  - **Avoid high downpayment**
  - **Review the work** - have the plumber turn on the water, run the water and look for other leaks after repairs are complete but before final payment.
  - **Do your research** - ask friends or neighbors, look for plumbers with experience, check references Note: It's best to get multiple bids but during this time that may not be possible.
  - Make sure the plumber you hire is licensed and insured. Visit the [Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners](#) to confirm the plumber you are hiring is licensed.

#### **How to Turn Off Your Water:**

- Turn off the water supply either to the line or to the main, if needed.
  - Follow the leaking pipe back to the source and shut off the valve. The hinge will be running the same way as the pipe and should be turned perpendicular to turn off the water supply.
  - The main is outside in the yard near the street (look for a plastic cover) or on the side of the house. If the valve is not underneath the plastic cover, follow in a straight line from the plastic cover to the house to find the main shut-off valve.