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As the last newsletter of the year, it is also the letter just before the winter season arrives. As you recall, last year's winter was warmer than usual - - and much dryer. Almost no rain fell during the autumn and snow was lacking. The lack of moisture in the soil and lack of snow cover allowed the frost depth to go deep earlier and eventually deeper putting a lot of cold stress on the water system. It doesn't seem logical that snow cover helps against freezing of pipes and valves, but it acts like a blanket that keeps cold in the air from sucking the heat out of the ground. At the same time moisture in the soil must give up a great deal of heat before it freezes, thus retarding the rate at which freezing temperatures go deep. If we experience the same thing this season, it can be another tough year for both your water company and for your own water system.

Getting ready for this winter, here are some tips and reminders:

Winterize: For those that leave their homes for the winter without heat, most are familiar with the protections necessary to keep pipes from freezing. This is a reminder to take those important steps. At the least, shut off power to the water pump. You can now also have MMWC turn off water at the meter at **no cost** (previously this was a charge; turn-on is still charged). This helps ensure that should a break occur due to freezing expensive damage and water costs are avoided.

Protect: Freezing of any part of the water system can be aggravating at least or disastrous at worst, so protecting it is important. Keeping pipes warm inside the house can always be done by having adequate heat left on. If that is not desirable, then winterizing as mentioned above is recommended. For the water system outside, things get more difficult.

The meter pit is one such item that can be a problem. Since the meter pit belongs to the property owner, it is up to that owner to provide the protection of the pipes that connect to the meter. Meter pits in our subdivision have such widely varying conditions which make some more vulnerable to freezing than others. Sun exposure, terrain and soil types all contribute to wide variability. Depending on the conditions, having additional insulation above the meter can help, but otherwise having a heat source may be necessary. Providing such protection is difficult to accomplish in most cases since electrical outlets are not conveniently located nearby. Whatever heat source gets used, it must be used with caution since the meter and connecting piping are plastic and can be destroyed – a very costly fix. Contact the office if you would like further advice on how to prevent freezing of the meter pit components.

Another common freeze problem is the float valve within the cistern. A cistern heater is required. There are tank heaters and other choices that can help keep those from freezing. Again, if are unsure what heating method to use contact the office for suggestions to protect your cistern parts from freezing.

One issue a few customers experienced last winter was the lack of usage showing on their monthly invoice. If someone is in the residence and you are not showing usage, there is probably a problem developing and you need to contact the office immediately.

Usually simple planning for cold and taking preventive measures go along way to ensuring that water will be available throughout the winter season, but if you need advice for implementing measures, our staff is able to give advice based on their experience over the years. In any event, do not wait until a problem occurs to implement preventive protection.