

Things to do before your trip

If possible, have someone check your home. A water leak, failed heating system or frozen pipes can be costly.

Saving energy

Winter

- Set the thermostat to a lower temperature but be careful not to freeze pipes. 55°F is generally considered safe, but some homes have problems with freezing pipes even at 72°F, while some well-insulated homes have no problems at thermostat settings lower than 55°F. Some furnace manufacturers require temperatures no lower than 60°F. Check the owner's manual. If you have a programmable thermostat, be sure it's holding a constant temperature and **not** running its programmed settings.
- Open cabinet doors below sinks to keep water pipes warmer.
- Freeze alarms can be purchased. Some alarms dial a phone number that you select. Others simply turn on a lamp to alert a neighbor.
- Close the damper and glass doors on fireplaces.
- Close and lock windows and doors.

Summer

- Turn off air conditioners.

Anytime

- Set gas water heaters to "pilot." Turn off electric water heaters at the breaker or fuse box.



- Refrigerators typically cost between \$4 and \$15 per month to run. MGE doesn't recommend unplugging refrigerators during humid summer months because mold may grow. If you choose to unplug your refrigerator, clean it out and wedge the doors open to prevent mold growth. Make sure a child or pet can't get trapped inside.
- Unplug all electrical appliances except those that must remain on. Keep in mind that you may need to reset clocks when you return. Unplugging devices protects them from damage in the event of a lightning strike and eliminates any standby power consumption.

Preventing water damage

Call your water utility for advice. The Madison Water Utility telephone number is 266-4661. The main shut-off valve for your home is normally near the water meter indoors, but if you have hot water or steam heat, talk with your heating contractor before shutting off all water to the house.

- If you shut off the main valve, open the kitchen sink faucets to drain the pipes.
- Unplug the water softener so it won't regenerate.
- If you do not shut off the main valve, shut off individual water supplies to the washer, refrigerator (if it has an ice maker or water dispenser), water heater, etc. Shut off the ice maker if the water supply is shut off.

MGE doesn't recommend shutting off the heat entirely if outdoor temperatures will be below freezing. If you choose to do so, call your water utility or a plumber first.

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Resources

- Preventing frozen pipes: http://www.statefarm.com/learning/loss_prevent/learning_lossprevention_frozpipes.asp
- Crime prevention and vacation checklists: Search the Internet for “vacation preparation” or “vacation checklist.”
- Standby Power Page: Articles on hidden energy users. <http://standby.lbl.gov/>