

If pipes freeze at my rental, what should I do? Here are your options



BY [ELEANOR NASH](#) From the [Kansas City Star, January 17, 2024](#)

Even though the snow may be melting, your home's pipes might not be.

Kansas and Missouri are experiencing a respite from sub-zero temperatures which froze the area during Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend.

But many renters and homeowners still do not have running water due to frozen or burst pipes — and more cold weather is on its way.

Is your landlord required to fix your plumbing? Does your rental insurance cover water damage?

Here's what to do if your pipes froze or burst in your Missouri or Kansas rental:

AS A TENANT, DO I HAVE A RIGHT TO RUNNING WATER IN MY HOME?

Rental properties in Missouri and [Kansas](#) are required to have habitable living conditions, including running water and working plumbing.

Kansas City residents have additional protections from the [Tenant's Bill of Rights](#), passed by the City Council, which states, "Rental property units must also maintain working amenities including but not limited to water heating facilities, heating facilities, water and sewer lines, plumbing and electrical fixtures."

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY PIPES ARE FROZEN?

If you own a home, [fixing your plumbing](#) is your responsibility. If you're a renter, here are your options:

In Missouri, reach out to the landlord in writing as soon as possible and save copies of everything, according to the Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom. If your landlord has not completed the repairs after a reasonable amount of time (which depends on the situation), you might be able to deduct the cost of repairs from your rent, depending on the total cost and your standing as a renter, according to Missouri Legal Services.

In Kansas, you should also [reach out in writing](#), according to Kansas Legal Services. If you want to end your Kansas lease because of uninhabitable conditions, communicate a date at least 30 days in the future and on the usual day you pay rent. If your landlord does not start work on the repairs you asked about within 14 days of receiving your message, your lease will end on the date you listed.

In some areas, you can also contact local government inspectors to see if the property is up to safety standards. This can be helpful if your landlord is not responding.

[Kansas City](#): 816-513-6464

[Wyandotte County](#): 913-573-8649

[Olathe](#): 913-971-6200

[Overland Park](#): 913-895-6270

HOW CAN I TRY TO DEFROST THE PIPES MYSELF?

Try to find exactly where the freeze occurred and [heat that area up with a space heater or hairdryer](#), the American Red Cross recommended. Keep your eye on the heater and don't use an open flame or gas-powered equipment.

Pipes can begin to thaw on their own once the temperature surrounding the plumbing rises above freezing, but experts recommend you don't wait that long — it will increase your risk of a burst.

WHAT IF MY LANDLORD DOES NOT FIX MY WATER?

If your running water is not restored and your landlord isn't responding to your request, you can contact a housing advocate or attorney. Here is a list of organizations to help you through the process:

[KC Tenants](#): 816-533-5435

[Heartland Center for Jobs & Freedom](#): 816-278-1344

[Legal Aid of Western Missouri](#): 816-474-6750

[Kansas Legal Services](#): 316-267-3975

[Kansas Housing](#): 785-217-2001

DOES MY RENTERS INSURANCE COVER DAMAGE FROM BURST PIPES?

Renters insurance might cover the cost to repair or replace belongings damaged by water. Whether a burst pipe counts [depends on the company](#) and policy you purchased. Contact your insurance provider to see what your plan covers, and [make a list of your belongings and their value](#) so you know what needs replacing.

WHERE CAN I SHOWER WHILE MY WATER'S OUT?

[Kansas City community centers](#) sell \$5 day passes, where you can use their showers.

[Planet Fitness](#) also offers free day passes to their gym facilities.

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