

PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM DAMAGE

SEWER BACKUPS

Units in each building share a *single* sewer lateral to the County sewer line. Water from sinks, bathtubs, washing machines, or toilets exits the building through the single sewer lateral. This simple fact means that *all residents must be careful about what goes down garbage disposals and toilets.*

Our plumbing systems were not initially designed for garbage disposals, which were retrofitted in the 1970s onto a system built during the Second World War. The rule of thumb in Fairlington is “less is more” when using a garbage disposal. Disposals should be used only for bits of food left when working at the sink. If in doubt, place items in the regular trash.

If you experience a sewer backup, immediately contact your plumber of preference. Ask neighbors in your building to use as little water as possible until the line is cleared.

SEVERE COLD AND FROZEN PIPES

As all residents know, water expands as it freezes. This expansion puts tremendous pressure on whatever is containing it, including metal or plastic pipes, and *those pipes can break.* Pipes that freeze are usually exposed to severe cold, like outdoor hose bibs and water supply pipes in unheated interior areas like basements, attics, or kitchen cabinets. In addition, pipes that run against exterior walls that have little to no insulation are also subject to freezing.

Frozen pipes are not just a threat to the unit owner’s property but also to units and property around it. Residents should follow the following guidelines to prevent damage to the community:

Winterize Properly. Before outdoor temperatures drop below freezing, residents should shut off water to outside faucets, remove hoses and open outside spigots, and set thermostats no lower than 60 degrees to protect indoor pipes. In some units, even higher thermostat settings may be required to protect water lines from freezing during the coldest weather. In all but the “B units” the front water spigot turnoff is typically located above the water heater and the backyard water spigot turnoff is under the kitchen sink. Lower B unit apartment front and back water spigot turnoffs are in the laundry room above the water heater. In addition, in some Arbor attics there are exposed pipes that can burst in extreme cold if the house is not properly heated and the pipes are not insulated.

Keep Homes Heated, Even in Your Absence. Make sure that your HVAC system is set to a temperature that will prevent pipes from freezing. This is especially important for vacant units, vacationers, extended absences, and off-site owners. Thermostats should be set high enough (60 or above) so that basements where the main water lines enter the unit stay warm enough to prevent freezing.

Thermostats Should Be on the Main Floor. Do not move the thermostat to the upstairs bedroom or hallway without raising the temperature setting of the thermostat. The lower floors will be 5-10 degrees colder and the basement even colder due to air entering the unit through the dryer vent.

Run Water Through Pipes During Periods of Extreme Cold. Running cold water through the pipes, even at a trickle, will help prevent pipes from freezing. This strategy to prevent freezing pipes requires that someone be home to monitor the flow of water. Even at a trickle, sinks, bath tubs or showers that become accidentally blocked can cause the same water damage you are trying to avoid!

The Responsibility of Protecting a Unit from Water Damage is the Owner's! Co-owners are responsible for all pipes that serve their unit. If pipes burst, however, be sure to contact the Arbor Office so the Management Agent can help you coordinate with neighbors and determine whether an insurance claim should be filed on the Master Insurance Policy.