



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

Even parts of an underground sprinkler system have components above ground. Sprinkler systems should be shut down and cleared of water before the first hard freeze each year.

# WINTERIZE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS BEFORE A FREEZE HITS

## Lines need to be cleared of water in the fall to prevent damage

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

As the weather gets cold and homeowners prepare their homes for winter, those with underground sprinkler systems have extra responsibilities.

Water left in the system as the weather dips below freezing can expand in the wrong places, damaging the system and resulting in hefty repair bills in the spring.

In order to prevent damage, property owners should find the main shutoff valve and turn it off, preventing more water from entering the system.

Some leftover water will already be resting in the pipes, however, which is why the system needs to be “blown out” with pressurized air, removing extra water lingering in the pipes.

Lou Lyons, owner of Elmer’s Irrigation in Hermiston, said the right time to blow out a system depends on the weather for the year, but is usually somewhere around the beginning of October.

“It’s usually based on the weather and how quick it gets to freezing, because that’s what causes the damage,” he said.

He said a night or two dipping down below 32 degrees might be alright, but if homeowners procrastinate too long and a hard freeze hits it can really do damage.

“Any system that was installed should have a way to hook a compressor to it, it’s just a matter of getting it done,” he said.

Some people will do it themselves, Lyons said, if they have access to an air compressor and know how to go through the system zone by zone with the right volume of air to expel all the water but not damage the pipes. For homeowners worried about getting it right, there are a variety of landscaping companies and individuals that advertise their services in town.

“Some guys have these big compressors, and they can hit it real quick,” he said.

How vulnerable the rest of the system is depends on how deep the pipes are underground and where other components



STAFF PHOTOS BY GARY L. WEST

Pipes that are above ground can be protected from freezing by using insulating tape or tubes to protect the system during freezing weather.



Water to underground systems needs to be turned off and lines cleared of water prior to the first hard freeze to prevent costly repairs in the spring

are located.

Many sprinkler companies with online tutorials for winterizing a home sprinkler system recommend insulating any above-ground pipes, valves or other components to help protect the system. Hardware stores sell self-sticking insulating tape, foam insulating tubes and other materials for that purpose.

Automatic systems should be put in “rain mode” or shut off completely when it’s time to winterize the system.

## Winter is coming



Some of the weatherization products available from Duck Brand for sealing drafts and protecting home elements from winter conditions.

### Easy ways to weatherize your home

StatePoint

Extreme temperatures — hot or cold — can send your energy bills through the roof while also creating an uncomfortable living space for your family.

Almost two-thirds of American adults live in a home that needs weatherization, according to a recent online survey, commissioned by Duck Brand, conducted by Harris Poll. To bring down energy costs and make the temperature in your home more comfortable, consider defending your home with helpful tools like Roll-On Window

Kits, Double Draft Seals, Socket Sealers and Attic Stairway Covers. You can also adjust ceiling fans, install a programmable thermostat and open or close curtains to leverage sunlight and shade.

To learn more about weatherization products and ways you can make your home more comfortable and efficient, visit [duckbrand.com/weatherization](http://duckbrand.com/weatherization).

Don’t resign yourself to high energy bills and an uncomfortable living space.

Weatherizing is simple, affordable and effective.

**PENDLETON PLUMBING LLC**  
FOR ALL YOUR PLUMBING NEEDS!  
**COMMERCIAL • RESIDENTIAL**  
**NEW or REMODEL**  
**REPAIRS or REPLACEMENT**  
Full Line of Handicap Accessible Tubs & Showers!  
\*5% off your next bill if you like us, rate us, or review us on Facebook or Yelp.  
J.t. Dooley 1802 SW Emigrant Ave. 24 Hr. Service  
Owner/Operator Pendleton, OR 97801 541.278.2800  
541.969.2800 • sales@pendletonplumbing.com  
LICENSED • BONDED • INSURED Lic #166108 - Contractor Lic #30-87PB - Plumbing Lic #6247JP - Journeyman

MOBILE DECORATING UNIT TO YOUR HOME  
**BLINDS ARE US!**  
FREE ESTIMATES  
Unbeatable Prices!  
Mini Blinds • Duettes  
Silhouette • Verticals  
Wood Blinds  
Pleated Shades  
Licensed • Bonded  
OR St Contr#127924  
Pendleton 541-276-5599 Hermiston 541-564-6474  
www.blindsareus.com

From the largest farm to the smallest yard, we provide you with the knowledge, the reliability and the quality products to get the job done.

**Quality, Convenience, Service by Familiar Faces**

**FEATURING:**  
Pipe: PVC, galvanized & black fittings; Filters: Clemons, CTC, Gheen;  
Pumps: Small central pumps, Pressure Tanks; Lawn & garden supplies: K-Rain sprinklers & valves;  
Hand line, Main line, wheel line: gaskets & fittings, pipe cutting & threading  
Pivot parts; Pivot sprinkler packages: Nelson & Senninger Motors: UMC and US;  
Wheel Boxes: UMC & Valley Valves: Butterfly, ball, gate, check; Automatic control valves: Nelson, Netafim

**ELMER’S IRRIGATION, INC.**  
Hwy 395, Hermiston • 541-567-5572 • Fax: 541-567-8721  
Serving the area since 1978 Emergency service also available

**YOUR HOME IS AN INVESTMENT**

We make it possible for homeowners to design, update & remodel beautiful, low-maintenance and energy efficient homes. Whether you are building new, remodeling or weatherizing your home, make sure that you are using quality materials and workmanship.

<p><b>INSULATION</b></p> <p>Take your home from chilly to cozy by making insulation upgrades. Ask about our duct sealing!</p>	<p><b>GUTTERS</b></p> <p>Eliminate damage to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundations</li> <li>• Driveways</li> <li>• Concrete</li> <li>• Decks</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Siding</li> </ul> <p>3 styles to choose from, over 30 colors, aluminum, steel, or copper.</p>	<p><b>WINDOWS</b></p> <p>Energy efficient windows keep you cool in the summer and warm in the winter.</p> <p><b>PLY GEM WINDOWS</b></p>
---	---	---

**FREE ESTIMATES!** Stop by our showroom!  
**Mr. Insulation Co., Inc.**  
541-567-2348 • 541-276-0097 • 1-800-265-2348 • 30599 Lauback • Hermiston  
www.mrinsulation.info  
Trade Ally of EnergyTrust of Oregon