



WHEN WATER GOES WRONG

Eight emergencies, decoded

First, always: know your main shut-off — before you need it.



Usually where the water line enters: basement front wall, crawlspace, or near the water heater. Righty-tighty closes it. (Full map: the Homeowner's Water Tour PDF.)

Burst pipe / water everywhere

DO FIRST Main shut-off. Now.

Open the lowest faucet in the house to drain the lines, and switch the water heater off (breaker, or gas to PILOT) so it doesn't heat an empty tank.

CALL: Call once the water's stopped — repairs and drying are pro work.

Water heater leaking

DO FIRST Close the cold valve on top of the heater.

Then power off (breaker / gas). A drip from the small side valve (T&P) is often pressure or expansion — not always a dying tank. Puddles from the tank body itself usually ARE the tank.

CALL: Tank-body leaks and anything gas: call, don't tinker.

No hot water

DO FIRST Check the breaker or the pilot light first.

Tripped breakers and blown pilots cause most "dead" heaters. If it's 10+ years old and rumbling or popping, sediment has likely buried the element — flushing may help, but plan its replacement on your terms.

CALL: Breaker keeps tripping, gas smell, or no pilot relight: call.

Discolored water

DO FIRST Run the COLD tap 10–15 minutes.

Brown after hydrant or utility work is stirred-up sediment — it usually clears. Brown from the HOT side only points at the water heater. Check whether neighbors see it too.

CALL: Persistent on both sides: call your utility. Hot side only: call us.

When you call any plumber, have these four things ready:

Where the water is coming from

Whether you shut the main

Heater: gas or electric

Photos, if it's safe to take them

WHEN WATER GOES WRONG — CONTINUED

Four more you'll be glad you read early

Boil advisory in your area

DO FIRST Boil 1 minute — drinking, cooking, ice, teeth.

The honest part: pitchers and Reverse Osmosis (RO) are NOT certified to make advisory water microbiologically safe — boiled or bottled only until the all-clear. Afterward, run cold taps a few minutes and toss the first batch of ice.

CALL: Immune-compromised household? Use bottled and ask your utility.

Frozen pipe

DO FIRST Open its faucet, warm the pipe gently.

Hair dryer, heating pad, warm towels — work from the faucet toward the frozen spot. NEVER an open flame. If it's already split, it will leak the moment it thaws — be ready at the main shut-off.

CALL: Can't find the freeze, or it burst: shut off and call.

Pressure suddenly low everywhere

DO FIRST Do the meter test.

Everything off → watch the meter. Moving? Something is leaking. Still? A failing pressure regulator (PRV) is the usual suspect — they wear out in 10–15 years and fail quietly.

CALL: Meter creeping or PRV suspected: call — both are quick pro fixes.

Sewage smell or backup

DO FIRST Stop running water. All of it.

Every flush and laundry load adds to the backup. Keep people and pets away from affected areas — this one is a health issue, not a mess.

CALL: This is always a call. Day or night.

BEFORE ANY OF THIS HAPPENS

Save the number now

(703) 997-9757

SwiftPro — licensed plumbers, the team behind your free water report.
Calm questions welcome too: the in-home Home Water Checkup is free.



Scan = call / save