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WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREENER HAMPTON ROADS

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Preparing for Winter Weather? Take a Green Approach that's Easy on the Environment

(Hampton Roads, Va., Feb. 19, 2020) – Snow and ice in the forecast? We don't get winter storms too often in Hampton Roads. But when we do, we raid the grocery store and hunker down at home like nobody's business. Before you pour the hot cocoa and pull out the blankets, make sure to keep the environment in the mind when preparing your home for Old Man Winter.

"When winter weather arrives, a lot of people mistakenly apply lawn fertilizer to deice their entry ways and sidewalks, but this is a real no-no," said Rebekah Eastep, askHRgreen.org team leader. "As the snow and ice melt, the fertilizer becomes a harmful pollutant when it drains into storm drains and waterways as runoff."

Eastep recommends trying a no-chemical approach instead by pouring a solution of warm water and table salt on small areas of thin ice, or using sand to improve traction on slippery surfaces. For those who insist on applying a chemical deicer, consider using magnesium chloride and calcium magnesium acetate, which are the least harmful to the environment. In addition, avoid rock salt, which can be hazardous to cars, lawns and pets.

"And don't wait until after the storm to handle this task. Deicing solutions are most effective when applied before snow or ice accumulates," Eastep said.

Here are other ways to keep your storm prep green amid all the snow:

- **Disconnect and drain garden hoses and rain barrels.** Packing away your garden hose will prevent damage from freezing temperatures and may decrease your chances of bursting a water pipe.
- **Keep fats, oils and grease out of the drain.** Keeping greasy food waste out of your drains will help to prevent clogs and sewer backups. Grease cools much faster in colder

temps and improper disposal could quickly lead to a clogged sewer line and a nasty mess in your home.

- **Reduce drafts.** Keep doors and windows near your water pipes closed during cold weather and seal any air leaks or cracks in your crawl space or basement.
- **Insulate.** Pipes in unheated areas of your home (garages and crawl spaces) should be insulated. Also, replace any wet insulation, which is worse than no insulation at all.
- **Find your shut-off valve.** In the event of a burst pipe, you don't want to be fumbling around looking for the main water shut-off valve. Locate it ahead of time and be prepared to act in an emergency.
- **Drip the faucet, but not too much.** When temperatures are predicted to be in the teens or below consider leaving a trickle of water running from a single faucet at the highest level in your home. This trickle of water should be about the size of the lead in a pencil. Leaving a faucet running wide open will not provide additional insurance against a frozen water pipe, but it will waste a lot of water.
- **If a pipe freezes, be cautious.** Thawing a frozen pipe can be dangerous because the pipes may become damaged or cracked, releasing water under great pressure. This is especially risky if you are using heat lamps, hair dryers or other electrical means of thawing the pipe. Never use an open flame on a frozen pipe. Be sure to thaw the pipe from the direction of the faucet so that the water has a safe way to escape as it melts.
- **If you lose all water service, call your provider.** When all the faucets in your home stop working, it's possible that your water meter has frozen. Your water utility service provider will need to send a technician to your home to check the meter and, if needed, correct the issue. However, the water utility does not assist with frozen pipes between the meter and your faucet so prevention is key to reducing the headache (and expense) of a frozen or burst water pipe.

For more information about all things green in Hampton Roads, just askHRgreen.org.

About askHRgreen.org

askHRgreen.org is your go-to resource for all things green in Hampton Roads – from recycling tips and pointers for keeping local waterways clean to water-saving ideas and simple steps to make local living easy on the environment. Launched in 2011, the region-wide public awareness and education campaign is administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and powered by the following members: The cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield; and HRSD. Like askHRgreen.org on [Facebook](#), follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), tune in to [YouTube](#) and subscribe to the “Green Living” [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.

