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Tom Mulvihill - General Manager Column

Tis' the Season for Conservation

December 21 marks the winter solstice – the shortest day of the year. Chilly nights have already led to the proliferation of overcoats and sweaters, not to mention slippers underneath our beds. At least a month or two of freezing nighttime temperatures lie ahead.

Of course, this is a magical time of year with its increased round of community events, social get-together and preparations for fast approaching holidays. But on a more pragmatic note, it's also the perfect time to winterize our homes and yards. Let's face it ... it's no fun to play host to a flood in the bathroom or kitchen caused by a frozen pipe – especially when it could have been easily prevented.

Here are a few simple suggestions to cold-proof your home:

- Wrap or cover any exposed water pipes. Canvas and burlap work well or you could use any hardy material. In fact, there are also many fiberglass insulation products available at local stores.
- If you leave home for a few days, leave the heat on with the thermostat set to at least 55. It's a good idea to leave kitchen and bathroom cupboards open so that warmed air can circulate around your indoor water pipes.
- If you haven't already insulated your water heater, do it now. You'll enjoy substantial savings on your electricity and/or gas bill all winter long.
- Schedule a professional maintenance/cleaning for your evaporative cooler. Have the seals checked for leaks. Clean pads and a well maintained mechanism use water and power more efficiently. You might also think of a way to recycle the run-off water to irrigate planter areas or trees come springtime.
- From now through February, roll back your irrigating to once every week or ten days. And be sure to water between 10 AM and 3 PM to avoid additional frost on your plants.

If you are interested in learning more about water efficient landscaping – a real money, water and time saving option for desert climates - we have a number of free publications that can help get you started.

And finally, on behalf of the Water District management and staff, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your water saving efforts this past year and wish you the happiest of holiday seasons. Remember, your Indian Wells Valley Water District is here to serve you.