INSULATION OF PIPES TO PREVENT FREEZING

If the surrounding air temperature remains sufficiently low for an ample period of time, insulation cannot prevent the freezing of still water, or of water flowing at such a velocity that the quantity of heat carried in the water is not sufficient to take care of the resulting heat losses that will cause the temperature of the water to be lowered to the freezing point. Insulation can materially prolong the time required for the water to give up its heat, and if the velocity of the water flowing in the pipe is maintained at a sufficiently high rate, freezing may be prevented.

Table 9 may be used for making estimates of the thickness of insulation necessary to take care of still water in pipes at various water and surrounding air temperature conditions. Because of the damage and service interruptions which may result from frozen water in pipes, it is essential that an efficient insulation be utilized. This table is based on the use of a material having a conductivity of 0.30. The initial water temperature is assumed to be 10 deg above, and the surrounding air temperature 50 deg below, the freezing point of water (temperature difference, 60 F).

TABLE 9. DATA FOR ESTIMATING REQUIREMENTS TO PREVENT FREEZING OF WATER IN PIPES WITH SURROUNDING AIR AT −18 F

Nominal Pipe Size (Inches)	Number of Hours to Cool 42 F Water to Freezing Point			Water Flow Required at 42 F to Prevent Freezing, Pounds per Linear Foot of Pipe per Hour		
	Thickness of Insulation in Inches (Conductivity, k = 0.30)					
	2	3	4	2	3	4
½	0.42	0.50	0.57	0.54	0.45	0.40
1	0.83	1.02	1.16	0.68	0.55	0.48
1½	1.40	1.74	2.02	0.84	0.68	0.58
2	1.94	2.48	2.90	0.95	0.75	0.64
3	3.25	4.27	5.08	1.24	0.94	0.79
4	4.55	6.02	7.20	1.47	1.11	0.93
5	5.92	7.96	9.69	1.73	1.29	1.06
6	7.35	9.88	12.20	1.98	1.46	1.19
8	10.05	13.90	17.25	2.46	1.78	1.43
10	13.00	18.10	22.70	2.96	2.12	1.70
12	15.80	22.20	28.10	3.43	2.45	1.93

The last column of Table 9 gives the minimum quantity of water at initial temperature of 42 F which should be supplied every hour for each linear foot of pipe, in order to prevent the temperature of the water from being lowered to the freezing point. The weights given in this column should be multiplied by the total length of the exposed pipe line expressed in feet. As an additional factor of safety, and in order to provide against temporary reductions in flow occasioned by reduced pressure, it is advisable to double the rates of flow listed in the table. It must be emphasized that the flow rates and periods of time designated apply only for the conditions stated. To estimate for other service conditions, the following method of procedure may be used.

If water enters the pipe at any temperature other than 42 F, the time required to cool it to the freezing point will be equal to $(t - 32)/10$ times that given in the table, or the rate of flow of water may be changed to $10/(t - 32)$ times the indicated flow rate in the last columns of Table 9. However, if the water enters the pipe at 34 F, it will be cooled to 32 F in one-fifth of

the time given in the table. It will then be necessary to increase the rate of flow so that five times the specified quantity of water will have to be supplied in order to prevent freezing.

If the minimum air temperature is −38 F (temperature difference 80 F) instead of −18 F, the time required to cool the water to the freezing point will be 60/80 of the time given in the table, or the necessary quantity of water to be supplied will be 80/60 of that given.

In making calculations to arrive at the values given in Table 9, the loss of heat stored in the insulation, the effect of a varying temperature difference due to the cooling of pipe and water, and the resistance of the outer surface of the insulation to the transfer of heat to the air, have all been neglected. When these factors enter into the computations it is necessary to enlarge the factor of safety. Also as stated, the time shown in the table is that required to lower the water to the freezing point. A longer period would be required to freeze the water, but the danger point is reached when freezing starts. The flow of water will stop and the entire line will be in danger as soon as the water freezes across the section of the pipe at any point.

If it is necessary to calculate the time required for the water to cool to 32 F, the following equation may be used

$$H = \frac{C_p\,(t_1 - 32)}{q_o\left(\dfrac{\pi}{6} \times r_2\right)} \tag{3}$$

$$C_p{}^* = \text{Capacity of pipe lb water/lin. ft.} = \frac{\pi r_o^2}{144} \times 62.4$$

$$q_o = \frac{k\left[\left(\dfrac{t_1 + 32}{2}\right) - t_2\right]}{r_2 \log_e \dfrac{r_2}{r_1}{}^{**}} \tag{4}$$

H = hours for water to cool to 32 F.
r_o = inside radius of pipe, inches.
t_1 = initial water temperature.

* May be obtained from manufacturers catalogs and handbooks.
** See Equation 1 for definitions of symbols.

When water must remain stationary longer than the times designated in Table 9, the only safe way to insure against freezing is to install a steam or hot water pipe parallel to the cold water pipe or to place an electric resistance heater along the side of the exposed water line. The heating system and the water line are then insulated so that the heat losses from the heating system are not excessive, and the heating effect is concentrated against the water pipe where it is needed. For this form of protection 2 in. of an efficient insulation may be applied.

APPLICATION OF INDUSTRIAL INSULATION

Small pipes are normally insulated with half-sectional insulation split horizontally and furnished with factory applied jackets forming hinge and lap. Large piping is insulated with segmental blocks, wired or banded in place, or with blanket insulations, particularly where removal for frequent servicing of the pipe is necessary. Indoors, sectional insulation