

SOME THOUGHTS ON FROZEN PIPES & METERS

Winter is the time of year when a number of residents call our offices complaining that they have no water. The vast majority of these calls are due to frozen pipes or meters. We offer the following suggestions to avoid the damage to your home or business that can occur from a frozen pipe or meter bursting.

1. If you are maintaining a vacant building or house, make sure that the building is either properly heated or the water has been shut off at the street box, the meter removed and the plumbing winterized.
2. If your meter is located in a basement closet or cabinet, make sure that the enclosure is heated as the rest of the house or building. Leave the door to the enclosure cracked open, to allow for warm air to circulate through the space.
3. The same problem can occur when pipes are located above a suspended basement ceiling. Move some of the ceiling tiles to allow for the warm air of the house to circulate.
4. It is also a good idea to check pipes that may be exposed to drafts of cold air coming through outside walls. Either sealing wall cracks or wrapping those potentially exposed pipes is important if you are to protect your plumbing.

If you experience a loss of water, and suspect that it may be a frozen pipe, it is quite likely that you have an opportunity to save your plumbing from potential damage. Here are a few suggestions to locate the area where the pipe may be frozen and thaw it before it bursts.

1. First open a cold water faucet in a laundry or work tub.
2. Second, do a check of areas where you know that pipes are located and that a draft of cold air may exist or where the meter and pipes are located in a closet or cabinet, or above basement ceiling tiles and isolated from the building heat.
3. If a pipe is frozen it will sometimes have a frost on the outside of it, or more often, will feel extremely cold to the touch.
4. You can often thaw a frozen pipe by using a hair dryer. As the area is heated up, the water will begin to flow and break the blockage loose, which is why you open the tub faucet first. **DO NOT USE A TORCH OR ANY OTHER TOOL WITH A FLAME TO THAW FROZEN PIPES.**
5. If this does not work, you may need to contact a licensed plumber for assistance.
6. If you suspect the meter is frozen, contact the Water Office at one of the numbers listed on our web page and we will send a technician to investigate and if necessary, replace the meter. There may be a meter replacement cost billed to you, if the Water & Sewerage Division determine that the freezing of the meter was avoidable and due to neglect.