

City of Hermantown

Frozen Service Line Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Provide the City of Hermantown's procedures to help eliminate frozen water and sewer lines
2. Clarify responsibilities prior to and in the event of frozen water and/or sewer service lines,
3. Assist in determining the utility bill, if customers run water to prevent the pipes from freezing/refreezing.

The City will provide maintenance only to the City's infrastructure in a safe and cost effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns. The City will use City employees, equipment, and/or private contractors to conduct this maintenance and repair.

Resident Responsibilities

1. In the City of Hermantown, for purposes of frozen service lines, water/sewer service lines are the responsibility of the resident from the house to the city main; including the water shut-off box (curb stop) and it is their responsibility to maintain it in proper working order.
2. In the event of a frozen water line, please contact the City.
3. Residents are responsible for hiring and paying a licensed plumber or other firm capable of safely thawing their service lines. Homeowners will assume all risks and liabilities of using a pipe thawing service.
4. If the line is successfully thawed, the resident is to contact the city to notify staff that the line is open.
5. Residents are encouraged to monitor the temperature of their water.
6. If the water temperature reaches 35 degrees F. or lower, it is suggested that they run a trickle of water to prevent possible freezing of the line. Once the water temperature is above 35 you may stop the running water.
7. To try and prevent the line from refreezing, run a streamline of water about the thickness of a pencil.
8. Residents that find it necessary to run a trickle of water will be responsible for the water bill in its entirety, unless the resident is requested by the City to run water to protect the City's water and sewer systems then the resident will pay their average bill until at which time the City asks them to stop running the water.
9. Residents shall monitor the flow of water as to not cause a back-up in the home.

City Procedure

1. The City does not have the capacity to provide a service of thawing frozen service laterals to residents. We will assist in helping residents find a contractor to attempt the thawing of the line.
2. Calls received during regular working hours shall be responded to within that business day if staffing is available. Calls received after working hours will be responded to within 18 hours of receiving the call.
3. The City reserves the right to deviate from this policy at any time if deemed to be in the general public interest and the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the public.

Utility Bill

1. The City may make adjustments according to City Councils direction. Adjustments, if approved, will be based off the resident's three month average, prior to running water.
2. In order to receive an adjustment, the City must be notified by calling the City of Hermantown's Utility Department at (218) 729-3600.

FROZEN WATER LINE PREVENTION

Several City residents as well as residents in the neighboring cities have had their water lines freeze. The City is asking residents to be aware of the temperature of your water and take any necessary precautions. If you have experienced a frozen line in the past or if someone in your neighborhood has a frozen service line, the best prevention is to start a trickle of water.

The water line that runs from the City's main to inside the home is the owner's responsibility. If you have a frozen service line, the cost of thawing service lines can be expensive and there are a limited number of plumbers that have the equipment to thaw. The thawed lines are then more susceptible to being frozen again unless a steady stream of water is continuously run through the water line.

What residents need to know and understand is that the likelihood of frozen water lines will increase during February thru April when the outside temperature rises and drives the frost further down into the ground.

The city is recommending that resident's take preventative measures to keep their water lines from freezing. While these are not guaranteed to prevent a frozen water line, they will substantially reduce the risk. Some recommendations are as follows:

Monitor Water Temperature & water pressure:

If you don't wish to keep a steady stream of water flowing, you may try to monitor the temperature or pressure of the water coming out of your faucet. If you notice that the temperature is dropping, or the water pressure is dropping -- you may want to start a steady flow of water. You can measure your water's temperature with a thermometer by keeping the thermometer under a running faucet for about five minutes and then reading the temperature. The temperature should be around 45 degrees. If it drops to 40 degrees or below, the frost may be getting close to the service line, which may be a warning sign to start a steady stream of water.

• Keep a stream of water flowing at all times:

The best way to prevent the service line from freezing is to keep the water moving or running. Turn a faucet on with a steady stream about the width of a standard #2 pencil is effective to prevent freezing. All water going through the meter will be billed. (*For example: Water will run at approximately 575 - 700 gallons/day of usage x 30 days = 21,000 gallons divided by 1,000 and multiplied by cost per thousand gallons*). If you choose to run water, remember to monitor the flow of water so not to freeze your sewer lines and/or cause a back-up in your home.

If you have a frozen service line, there are a limited number of plumbers that have the equipment needed to thaw. Residents with frozen lines can contact the City of Hermantown Utility Department at (218) 729-3600 or contact the Hermantown Public Works Department at (218) 729-7441 for that information.

How to Help Prevent Frozen Water Pipes and Water Meters

When below freezing temperatures are sustained over a few days, water pipes and meters that are close to cold air may freeze. The City of Hermantown urges residents to take steps to prevent water pipes and meter from freezing. Frozen water meters and water pipes can stop water service and may be expensive to repair or replace. Property owners are responsible for protecting both water pipes and the water meter from damage. Preventing pipes and the meter from freezing is easier than trying to thaw them. The City of Hermantown offers these money saving suggestions:

Make frequent use of your water supply:

Flowing water often breaks up ice below freezing.

When outside temperatures remain below freezing, it's less expensive to run your faucet regularly than for you to repair a frozen or burst pipe.

Eliminate cold drafts near water pipes:

Tightly close doors and windows to the outside.

Install storm windows on basement windows.

Eliminate drafts from crawl space. Fill cracks in walls and around windows. Turn off water connections to garden hose. Connections at an inside valve and drain the exposed piping before freezing temperatures set in.

Provide warmth to the water pipes:

Open the door to the room where the pipes are located to allow warmth to circulate. Place a lighted bulb near water pipes. Never use open flames. Wrap pipes in insulation or heat tape. If your kitchen or bathroom sink is located against an outside wall, insulate the wall. Open cabinet door below the sink to allow warm air to reach the pipe.

Keep natural insulation on the services lines:

Keep the ground over your service line covered with snow. Snow actually can serve as an insulation over your service line.

How To Thaw Frozen Water Pipes

The pipes are frozen if no water comes from your faucets when you turn them on. Most likely the pipes nearest a wall, door, window, or along the floor are frozen.

1. Start by opening a faucet near the frozen pipe to release any vapor from the melting ice and so that you'll know when the water starts flowing again.
2. Begin warming the pipes nearest the faucet and work toward the frozen section.
3. Blow warm air on the pipe using a hair dryer. Do not leave the dryer unattended or allow it to overheat.
4. Do not use a blowtorch or open flame to warm pipes. This is a fire hazard and could cause an explosion.
5. Once water has begun to flow again, let a pencil-sized stream of water flow through the faucet until normal heating is restored to the area.
6. Eliminate cold drafts and allow warm air to circulate around the pipes to prevent freezing again.

How To Help Prevent A Frozen Water Meter

It is colder near the floor and along the block wall of a basement than at the ceiling, so make sure warm air is allowed to circulate around your meter. Follow the previous instruction about preventing freezing frozen water pipes. If your meter is in a separate room, leave the door open to this room to allow warmth to circulate. If your meter is in a cabinet, open the cabinet door. If the meter is in an outdoor pit, check to see that the cover fits properly and that it has no cracks into which cold wind can blow. The pipes, valves and the meter inside such pits should not touch the concrete walls.

If you suspect damage to water pipes or the water meter, call the Utility Department Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at 218 729-3600.

