How can I reduce the risk of frozen water service pipes?

- Majority of calls received for frozen water pipes and water meters are a result of inadequate heating and cold air drafts where piping is located in the home.
- If you have a history of pipes freezing, you can leave a cold water tap running at a steady stream of about 6 mm or 1/4 inch minimum (depending on temperature and length of cold snap) when outside temperatures are below freezing.

  ** Please do not run a water tap continuously unless the Town has requested that you do so. Only those who are requested to run their tap by the Town will be compensated for this increased use. Customers running taps to prevent frozen indoor plumbing will be responsible for resulting water use charges.*
- Open kitchen, bathroom and laundry cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. If piping is located next to exterior walls, leave the cupboard doors under your kitchen and bathroom sinks open.
- Shut-off and drain pipes leading to outside faucets.
- Wrap foam pipe insulation around pipes most susceptible to freezing (e.g. near outside walls, crawl spaces, attics). Insulate all exposed outside water pipes with specially designed foam pipe covers available at building supply or home improvement stores.
- Seal air leaks in your home and garage, especially in areas where pipes are located.
- If you will be away, have someone check your home and taps regularly.
- Keep garage doors closed and monitor the temperature inside the garage if there are water supply lines located in this area.
- Commercial water customers need to prepare for cold nights as well. Protect water pipes by wrapping all lines exposed to cold temperatures.

How can problems with frozen pipes be permanently corrected?

If your water service line has frozen in the past, and the frozen portion was located on your property, the best solution is to lower your service line to a depth of 1.8 metres. To help determine the depth of your pipes it is suggested that you contact a professional.

Who do I call for more information?

For more information, please call the Operations and Infrastructure Department at 905-476-4301.

Frozen Water Service FAQ's

Preventing frozen pipes before winter arrives

Information Inside This Brochure:

- Causes of freezing pipes
- Waterline responsibility
- Reducing the risk of frozen water services

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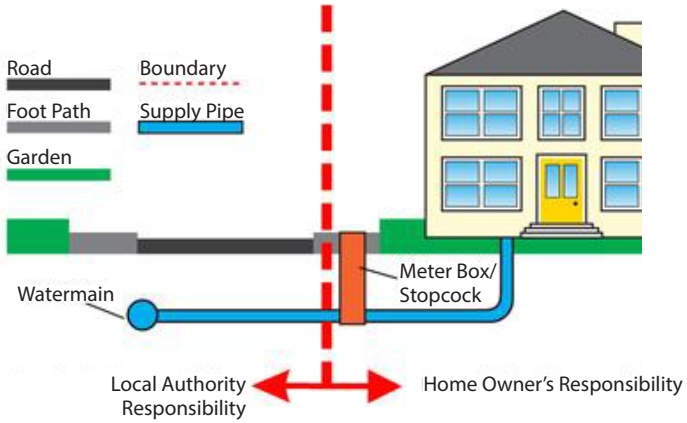
Many municipalities across Ontario endure extended frigid temperatures during the winter months. Having frozen pipes is both a headache and an inconvenience, and has the potential to lead to a burst pipe that may cause water damage in your home.

Being prepared and informed will help avoid the messy and often expensive issue of frozen pipes. The Town of Georgina has prepared some information surrounding how to prevent frozen water pipes before it occurs.

What can cause water services to freeze?

Most water services in Georgina are deeply buried for protection against frost. However, some water service lines are historically installed at a shallow depth by today's standards. Extremely cold temperatures or fluctuations between warm and cold temperatures can sometimes push frost to a depth that will freeze water services.



Water temperature

It takes very little exposure to cold temperatures for water to freeze. That is why it is important to make sure your water service lines are not exposed to cold air during the winter months.

Water has a unique property in that it expands as it freezes. This expansion puts tremendous pressure on whatever is containing it, including metal or plastic pipes. No matter the "strength" of a container, expanding water can cause pipes to break. Pipes that freeze most frequently are those that are exposed to severe cold like outdoor hose bibs, swimming pool supply lines, water sprinkler lines and water supply pipes in unheated interior areas. Places to watch include basements, crawl spaces, attics, garages and kitchen cabinets. Pipes that run against exterior walls that have little or no insulation are also subject to freezing.

Frost depth

This is the depth to which the ground is frozen. In Georgina, frost depth usually does not reach the level of our buried water infrastructure. However, with extremely cold conditions, frost may reach these levels towards the end of winter, usually in late February or early March. In early spring, it may seem warmer, but frost is still deep in the ground and remains as long as the temperature continues to drop below freezing at night. If the ground surrounding the service lines becomes frozen, it will increase the likelihood of water freezing in the pipes. When the water stops moving, as when water is turned off overnight, the temperature can lower quite quickly in stagnant water and freeze.

Who is responsible for water service lines? Who pays for the work to restore or provide temporary water service?

It is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain and/or replace the portion of the water service located within their building, and between their building and the property line. The Town of Georgina is responsible for the service located between the property line and the watermain.

If the freezing occurs on the private side of the property line, the homeowner is responsible to pay for the costs to thaw the water service. If the water line is frozen between the property line and the watermain, the Town pays the cost to thaw the water service. Property owners are responsible for contacting a plumber to determine if the service line is frozen on the public or private side. It would be in the best interest of all parties if the plumber advises the Town when the service is frozen on the public side so that necessary steps can be taken to thaw the service.

The Town maintains a record of service calls to residences and commercial properties with frozen water lines for future reference, and works with these customers to proactively manage this issue.

If you are a tenant, your landlord must contact the Town about issues with your water service.