



## Residents reminded to take steps to prevent frozen water pipes

**Port Colborne, ON (Jan. 13, 2022)** – Port Colborne residents are reminded to take steps to prevent frozen pipes as temperatures drop below zero. The city has already received phone calls from residents who are experiencing frozen plumbing and expect that many more properties could be affected this winter.

To avoid frozen water pipes in your home, consider the following:

- Open kitchen, bathroom, and laundry cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around plumbing.
- Outdoor faucets are the first to freeze. Disconnect, drain, and shut off any outdoor hoses and faucets.
- Insulate pipes most prone to freezing, especially near outside walls and in crawl spaces, attic, and garage, with a pipe sleeve.
- If your pipes are prone to freezing, consider contacting a plumber for advice on how best to protect your home.
- Leave a tap open enough for a pencil-thin stream of flowing water, so there is some movement of water in pipes that might be vulnerable to freezing.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.

If your pipes are already frozen, consider the following steps to thaw them:

- If you have a poorly insulated crawlspace, the frozen pipe may be in this area.
- Turn on a tap in the lowest point in the house (i.e. the cold-water faucet in the basement).
- Use a blow dryer to warm the suspected frozen pipe for one to two hours. Check the blow dryer regularly to ensure it does not overheat.
- Port Colborne Fire & Emergency Services does not advise the use of an open flame (i.e. blow torch, lighter) to thaw pipes, unless done by a professional who knows what safety procedures are required. Additionally, the use of welding equipment (to heat up pipes) adds additional hazards when attempting to thaw frozen pipes as the heat being radiated through the pipes can cause fires within a building. There have been cases in Niagara where this has caused significant damage to homes.
- Place a warm towel or rag around the suspected frozen pipe.
- Depending on the outside temperature and the extent of freezing within the pipe, the thawing process could take between one and six hours.

The City of Port Colborne is responsible for frozen water lines from the property line to the watermain, while **property owners are responsible for the water line from the property line to the building, and for all internal plumbing.** To learn more about frozen water pipes, visit our [website](#).

Another plumbing component that could be affected in cold weather is the water meter. While the water meter is owned by the city, the [water by-law 3151/22/95](#) states that it is the property owner's responsibility to protect the water meter from freezing. Residential sized meters have a backing plate, called a frost plate, which is designed to burst should the meter freeze. This plate not only prevents damage to the main body of the meter should it freeze, but prevents the plumbing attached to the meter from bursting.

To avoid a frozen water meter, consider these suggestions:

- Inspect your water meter (usually located near the main building water shut off inside the home – usually in a basement or a crawl space) to ensure the area is above eight degrees Celsius.

- If the meter is in a closed in area (i.e. cold cellar, closet, behind a panel) leave the door/panel open to allow warm air to circulate around the meter.
- If the meter is installed close to an outside wall, consider installing a piece of foam board between the meter and the wall – cold air can radiate from the wall and cause the meter to freeze.
- Meters in crawl spaces or unheated areas, such as garages, require special protection. Ensure the meter is well insulated, or consider installing freeze protection cable, available at hardware stores, along the water line and the meter to ensure the plumbing and the meter does not freeze.

If your meter has frozen and the frost plate or the meter has burst, property owners should do the following:

- Turn off the water at the building shut off valve before the water meter to stop further flooding of the basement or crawl space. If the building shut off valve isn't functional, contact the Public Works Department after-hours by calling 905-835-2900 and press '9' to have the water shut off at the property line.
- Once the water has been shut off and Public Works has been contacted, property owners have two options to repair the burst frost plate:
  - Property owners, or their plumber, can pick up a frost plate repair kit at the Public Works Department, located at 1 Killaly Street West, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, and repair the meter themselves, and then contact the city to come out to inspect and re-seal the meter. The property owner will receive an invoice for the frost plate repair kit (approximately \$25), and if they had a plumber repair the frost plate, pay the plumber's invoice.
  - Request that city staff repair the water meter. The property owner would be invoiced for frost plate repair kit and will be invoiced for the staff time required to complete the repair. Note that city staff will not enter confined crawlspaces, nor pump water out of crawlspaces or basements to facilitate repairs. In some cases, the homeowner may have to retain a plumber.
  - Note that the repair costs for emergency repairs (between 4 p.m. and 8 a.m., Monday to Friday, and all-day Saturday and Sunday) will be invoiced at afterhours emergency call out rates.
- In some cases, the meter itself freezes and bursts. In these instances, the homeowner still has two options to replace the meter; however, the cost for a replacement meter is much higher than the cost for a frost plate, and the property owner will be billed for the actual cost of the replacement water meter – beginning at approximately \$550.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, City staff are unable to enter private homes. At this time meter repairs will need to be fixed by hiring a plumber.

### **About the City of Port Colborne**

Located on the south coast of the scenic Niagara Region, with a mission to provide an exceptional small town experience in a big way, Niagara's Port of Call has found the perfect balance – successful industrial and commercial sectors, comfortable and scenic residential areas, white sand beaches, unique culinary choices, the world class Sugarloaf Marina, fishing, golfing, trails, shopping districts along the historic Welland Canal and an energized festival and entertainment scene that includes live theatre – truly a community that adds to the overall Niagara experience. To learn how you can PORTicipate with us, visit our [website](#).

### **For more information, contact:**

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