

TOWN OF TICONDEROGA
WATER DEPARTMENT
WINTER WEATHER PROBLEMS

I think my water service is frozen – What do I do?

If you find that your water service is frozen, call the Town's Water Department at (518) 585-6144 during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 6:00 am – 2:30 pm) or call the Water Department Clerk at (518) 585-6265 ext. 304 during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm)

After hours and holidays call Lewis Dispatch at (518) 585-3456. The Town will work with you to determine where the cause of the frozen service is located, including, where necessary, conducting an on-site investigation.

What can I do to protect myself from a frozen water service?

Not every household is at risk. Please call the Town's Water Department if you have a history of frozen water service and you are experiencing unusually low water pressure.

Please do not run water tap continuously unless you have history of frozen household pipes or frozen water service, or the Town has requested that you do so.

How can I get water?

If the frozen service cannot be resolved, and is determined to be a Town problem, the Town may work with you and a willing neighbor to set up a temporary water service line through your outside water taps.

This temporary water service provide **non-potable water** until the ground thaws in the spring. **You will need to continue to use bottled water for drinking and cooking until regular service is restored. If you are set up with a connection from a neighbor, you must leave one tap running constantly at a finger-width stream in order to ensure your temporary line does not freeze.**

How long will it take to fix my water service?

It could take until mid-April for regular water service to be restored as the ground around water service lines must thaw out in order for water to start running again. In the interim, the Town of Ticonderoga may work with you and a willing neighbor to set up a temporary water service line through your outside water taps.

The time it takes to set up this line will depend on the number of customers experiencing frozen water service. You will be placed on a list and provided with an estimated time for connection. If your call comes in overnight, the earliest you should expect a visit is the following day due to hazards posed by completing this work in the dark.

The water provided by a temporary connection is **not potable and bottled water will be required for drinking and cooking** until regular water service is restored. **If you are set up with a connection from a neighbor, you must leave one tap running constantly at a pencil-width stream in order to ensure your temporary line does not 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 the building, and between the building and the curb shutoff box located near the property line. The Town of Ticonderoga is responsible for the service located between the property line and the water main and does not include the curb shutoff box.

If the freezing occurs on the private side of the property line, the Town will charge the homeowner for the costs to restore water service. The Town of Ticonderoga maintains a record of service calls to residences and commercial properties with frozen water lines for future reference.

If the Town has determined that the water line is frozen for the portion they are responsible for; property line and the water main, and they are able to restore your service, there is not a charge. Should your water line re-freeze and the Town returns, you will be charged for this service.

Why has my water service frozen?

Most water services in the Town of Ticonderoga are deeply buried approximately five (5) feet for protection against frost. Some water service lines, however, are installed at a shallow depth due to obstructions in the ground (rock, ledge, sewer mains, etc.....). Extremely cold temperatures, or fluctuations between warm and cold temperatures, can sometimes push frost to a depth that will freeze water services. Winter weather sometimes provides the kind of conditions that cause water service lines to freeze.

Water Temperature

With the water already being cold as it enters the water distribution system, it takes very little exposure to colder temperatures for it to freeze. That is why it is important to make sure your water service lines are not exposed to colder air during winter months.

Frost Depth

This is the depth to which the ground is frozen. The Town of Ticonderoga, 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. Additionally, if we have colder weather in fall months, the frost depth can also put service lines at risk.

If the ground surrounding the service lines becomes frozen, it will cool the already cold water in the pipes. When the water stops moving, as when water is turned off overnight, the temperature can lower quite quickly and freeze the water. This is why it is important to keep a minimal amount of water running during these events; it keeps warmer water moving through the frost zone.

What can I do if my household pipes freeze?

If you turn on your taps and have no water, it could simply be that the pipes in your home are frozen, rather than your service line. You may want to contact a licensed plumber for assistance. Here are some steps to take if you want to try and thaw indoor pipes yourself, as well as precautions you should be aware of to protect your home:

Precautions:

Do not use a torch with an open flame to thaw pipes, as this is a fire hazard. Ensure you know the location of your master water shut-off valve. The frozen pipe may be broken and when the water in it thaws, it will leak. If the pipe is broken, you will need to shut off the water in your house until the pipe is repaired.

Steps to thaw a frozen pipe:

If you have a history of frozen pipes, or your water is currently frozen turn on a tap in the basement, preferably the cold water faucet in the laundry room.

Use a blow dryer, electric blanket or heating pad to warm the suspected frozen pipe for one or two hours. Check blow dryer regularly to ensure it does not overheat. Place a warm towel or rag around the suspected frozen pipe.

You may also use a portable heater with caution, especially around flammable materials. Always use caution when applying any heat source near insulation or other flammable materials.

Depending on the outside temperature and the extent of freezing within the pipe, the thawing process could take between one and six hours.

If the service pipe is type K soft copper, a “welding machine” should NOT be used to thaw out the service pipe. This method poses a serious fire hazard to the building and those surrounding and is prohibited in most jurisdictions.

Another recommended method is the use of a pulse jet de-icer; this self-contained unit has a nylon probe that injects high pressure pulsating hot water down the copper or plastic service pipe. The combination of pulsating hot water and high pressure thaws most lines safely. Units are commercially available that can thaw up to 150 feet of service line.

If these steps do not resolve the problem, contact a licensed plumber.

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

The majority of calls received for frozen water pipes are a result of inadequate heating and cold air drafts where piping is located in the home. If this is the case, you may wish to contact a plumbing contractor to thaw the lines.

If you have a history of pipes freezing, you can leave a cold water tap running at a steady stream of about ¼ inch (approximate thickness of a drinking straw) when outside temperatures are below freezing.

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 you kitchen and bathroom sinks open. Please take care to remove household cleaners and other items that could harm children or pets while the cupboard doors are open.

Do not set your household temperature below 55 degrees Fahrenheit at night or when the house is vacant.

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, you can shut off the water main service valve in your basement and open all taps to drain the water out of your plumbing lines to prevent them from freezing. Have someone check your home regularly.

Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.

Commercial water customers need to prepare for cold nights as well. Protect fire lines by wrapping all lines exposed to cold temperatures.

How can I correct frozen pipe problems permanently?

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 that cannot be penetrated by frost. The Town of Ticonderoga requires new water lines to be buried at a minimum depth of five (5) feet.

