

City of Farmer City
Public Works

Frozen Pipe Policy

Each person serviced by the water system shall take reasonable precautions to prevent their water pipes from freezing.

Frozen lines from the water main through the B-box are the responsibility of the City while frozen lines from the B-box to the home are the responsibility of the homeowner.

If the pipe freezes, the property owner may call the Water Department to thaw the pipe.

During regular business hours: If it is determined that the blockage is in the portion of the water piping that is the responsibility of the property owner, the property owner will be billed a flat fee of \$150.00 for assistance with the thawing. If it is determined that the blockage is in the portion of the pipe that is the responsibility of the City, this charge will be waived.

Outside of regular business hours: If a property owner requests that the Water Department thaw a frozen pipe outside of normal business hours, the property owner will be billed for this service at Water Department billing rates, including any appropriate overtime labor rates. If it is discovered the blockage is in the portion of the pipe that is the responsibility of the City, this charge will be waived.

Thawing will be done on a first-call first service basis. The order of thawing may be changed when, in the judgment of the Water Department, there is a reason to do so.

While the Water Department will attempt to accommodate requests as described, there may be circumstances under which this service may not be provided, including but not limited to situations where:

- The existing piping is in such condition that in the judgment of the Water Department, connecting and using the thawing equipment could result in damage to that piping.
- Conditions in the area to be used for thawing are such that, in the judgment of the Water Department, they pose a safety or health hazard to the employee.

The Water Department will make reasonable efforts to accommodate all requests for thawing in a timely fashion. The timing of the work is subject to other thawing work previously requested and other circumstances such as other water system emergencies or snow removal operations. The City shall not be held responsible for damages suffered due to delays in thawing the water pipes. Property owners may, at their own expense, contract with other individuals to thaw their frozen water service.

If the Water Department determines that they cannot respond to a property owner's request for thawing in a reasonable amount of time, or determines that available equipment is not suitable for a specific thawing operation, the City may authorize the property owner to contract with another party to thaw the pipe. The City will not be held responsible for any damages resulting from the pipe thawing attempts of the selected contractor or others. The property owner shall give notice to the Water Department to allow the Department the opportunity to have a representative on site when a contractor thaws a water pipe.

If the pipe is thawed in such a manner as the location of the blockage can be determined, the representative and contractor shall agree upon the locations. Costs of thawing shall be as follows:

If it is determined that the blockage is in the portion of the water piping that is the responsibility of the City, the City will reimburse the property owner for the reasonable costs of thawing.

If it is determined that the blockage is in the portion of the water piping that is the responsibility of the property owner, the property owner will be responsible for the thawing costs.

If the location of the blockage cannot be determined, the City will reimburse the property owner for 50% of reasonable thawing costs.

If the Water Department is not notified prior to the thawing operation, the property owner will be responsible for the thawing costs.

Waiver of charges, costs and reimbursements by the City as described shall be limited to one time.

When extended cold weather increases the risk of water main or service line freezing, residents are responsible for running their water.

- Run the cold water at a rate of one gallon every four minutes – about the stream width of a pencil.
- Keep your drain clear of debris to prevent overflow or flooding.

It is difficult to predict which water lines will freeze, but once a line has frozen and thawed, it is essential to keep water running continuously. Turning water off, even for a few minutes, could cause the line to re-freeze. Some will see a drop in line pressure before the line freezes while some are given no warning at all. The City does NOT give a discount for the water used if you let your water run. All water going through the water meter will be billed as usual. The cost of thawing a service line varies by contractor and the extent of the blockage, but letting the water run is the best insurance policy available.