



Water & Sewer Department  
Ryan Kowalski, Utility Superintendent

## **FROZEN WATER SERVICE PREVENTION**

During periods of cold weather and low wind chills, water pipes and water meters can become susceptible to freezing which can lead to broken pipes and water damage if exposed areas aren't properly insulated or heated. The City of Platteville will be following the guidelines set forth by PSC 185.88 listed at the bottom of this letter. Below are some tips to help minimize the chance of freezing water pipes.

1. Before freezing temperatures set in, turn off the water to outside garden hose connections at an interior valve and drain the exposed piping. Pay close attention to vacuum break backflow preventers to assure they are manually drained.
2. Pipes under kitchen sinks or cupboards - open the cabinet doors below sinks to allow warm air to circulate around the pipes.
3. Pipes near broken or open basement windows – ensure windows are properly sealed and consider installing storm windows in the basement.
4. Crawl spaces and equipment rooms, particularly in trailer parks – ensure these spaces are properly heated and vented. Wrap pipes with insulation or electric heat tape.
5. Pipes near the foundation or cracks in the basement wall - fill cracks in walls to prevent cold air from leaking in. Wrap pipes with insulation or heat tape.
6. Pipes near an exterior wall in an unheated room - make sure the interior temperature of your home or building AND the basement never drop below 32° F. Wrap pipes with insulation or electric heat tape.
7. Outdoor water meter pits – ensure the pit cover fits properly and there are no cracks into which cold wind could blow. The pipes, valves, and the water meter inside such pits should not touch the concrete walls.

### **SIGNS YOUR WATER PIPES MAY BE FREEZING**

1. Water temperatures less than 35° F at any fixture
2. Reduced water flows and pressure at a fixture
3. Discolored water
4. Sputtering sound when opening a fixture

### **THAWING FROZEN PIPES**

If the water pipes at your residence or business freeze up, it's safest to use hot air from a hair dryer or exhaust from a vacuum cleaner to thaw the frozen areas. Electric heat tape can also be used but use with caution and follow the manufacturer's instructions explicitly. Never thaw pipes with an open torch or flame. Licensed plumbers have additional tools that can be effective to thaw pipes.

### **OTHER TIPS**

If you own a vacant residential or commercial property, ensure the pipes and water meters are in a heated area, and are not closed off behind cabinets and doors. If there is no heat in the building, contact The City of Platteville and your plumber to have the water shut off to the building, meters removed, and the plumbing system winterized.

If you are leaving your home for a weekend or an extended period of time, it is always a good idea to turn the building control water valve "off". You never know when a heating system might stop working, or a water heater tank fails. Homes that use boilers for heat require a pressurized water system to operate, so turning off your water supply is not an option.



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Water losses due to broken pipes are billed to the customer, including sewer flow charges. If the water meter is damaged as the result of freezing, the customer is also charged for its replacement.

If you have questions concerning cold weather protection, please contact Utility Superintendent Ryan Kowalski at 608-778-4701 or [kowalskir@platteville.org](mailto:kowalskir@platteville.org).

### **PSC 185.88 FROZEN SERVICES**

(1) Thawing of a customer's lateral shall be at the utility's expense if:

(a) The freeze-up is a direct result of a utility disconnect and the disconnection occurs during a time when conditions are such that freeze-up could reasonably be expected to occur or.

(b) The customer's portion of lateral is electrically conductive and:

1. It is the first thaw for the customer at the location and.

2. The utility has not provided the customer with seasonal notice of the corrective actions to be taken for a known condition.

(2) Lateral thawing shall be at the customer's expense if:

(a) The customer's lateral is not electrically conductive and the freeze-up is not a direct result of a utility disconnect as set forth in sub. (1) (a) or;

(b) The customer neglected to provide or maintain proper insulation or protection for the lateral according to standard accepted practice, or specific utility instructions on, for example, the required depth of burial needed to prevent freezing, or.

(c) The utility advises the customer of the corrective measures to be taken and the customer does not follow the utility's advice. (See s. [PSC 185.35 \(7\)](#) for bill adjustment where a utility requests a customer to let water flow to prevent freezing), or;

(d) If the utility disconnects for a dangerous condition.

The City of Platteville will follow PSC 185.35 (7) regarding adjustment of bills when a resident will need to run water to prevent freezing. Adjustments for billing will be based on the average of the previous 3 months.

Example, if the City of Platteville has a resident run water to prevent freezing in December, then the city will take an average water usage from the previous 3 months and use this as the billing amount until the residents is informed, they can stop running water.

### **PSC 185.35 Adjust of bills.**

(7) Where, because of some deficiency in the in the utility's portion of the facilities and at the request of the utility, a customer permits a stream of water to flow to prevent freezing of the service or main, the utility shall adjust the bill for the excess consumption which results.

**Adjustments of bills will not occur unless you have contacted the Utility Superintendent or are told by the Utility Superintendent to run your water to prevent freezing. The Utility Superintendent will inform the Utility Billing Specialist of the customer(s) who will require billing adjustments.**