

Frozen Service FAQ

What can property owners do to prevent their water service from freezing?

Property owners can protect their indoor plumbing from freezing by following a few points.

- Insulate Pipes in cool or drafty areas in the house. Particularly the basement or crawl space and in the garage.
- When traveling keep the house thermostat set to 15°C or above to prevent the house temperatures getting too cold. Have someone check your house while you are away.
- Turn off all outside faucets and drain the lines.
- Open cupboard doors in kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room if plumbing pipes are located next to exterior walls. This will help keep the area warmer to prevent freezing.
- If you notice a decrease in pressure and/or discoloured water this could be a sign that your service is starting to freeze. Running a small amount of water roughly the size of a pencil, from your faucet will help reduce the likelihood of your service freezing.

Who is responsible to pay for the extra water used when running your faucet?

If requested by Town staff to run your water continuously the property owner will be placed on average billing based on previous year consumption. Customers running water to prevent freezing at their own discretion will be billed for all water consumed.

How much water should I run when asked to keep a tap running continuously?

The water should flow from a faucet about the width of a pencil or 3 cups per minute. If you feel there is the possibility of having the tap accidentally turned off you can have a toilet adjusted to allow continuous water flow.

What should I do if I have no water and suspect my service to be frozen?

Call the Public Works office to inform the water department of the suspected frozen service. A Water Operator will be dispatched to your location to determine the location of the freeze. If frozen on the Town side of the infrastructure, the Water Department will be responsible to restore water service to the house. Your service call will be put into priority sequence and the Public Works Office will be contacting you when your service is going to be thawed or highlined.

If the freeze is found to be on the property owner side of the service it will be their responsibility to have the service thawed. It can be arranged to have the Water Operators thaw your service and the residence be billed accordingly.

If a service has been thawed or highlined and is frozen for the second time, the residence may be charged for the service call to thaw the temporary line or the service.

What is highlining?

Highlining is a house-to-house connection using an outside hose bib from each property. The arrangement is only possible with the consent of a neighbouring property. Each residence may notice a small decrease in water pressure if both users are using the water at the same time but nothing that would restrict your use significantly. Both residences will be placed on average billing based on previous year consumption.

If your water service is frozen and highlining is an option, it would be helpful and time saving if you call the Public Works office with your contact information as well as the contact information for the house used to supply water. Once all the information needed is collected and the required paperwork completed the Water Department can then perform the task of connecting the houses.

Am I able to drink the water coming from neighbour's house?

To safeguard everyone involved, the highlined water supply to both the donor and recipient properties are considered non-potable. This means that water should not be used for cooking or drinking. All other uses of water are safe. i.e. showering, laundry, washing dishes etc. Drinking water can be obtained at the designated filling location listed below.

How do I know when to turn off my water?

You will be contacted by Town Staff when to turn off your tap or readjust your toilet.

Once notified to stop running water you will be taken off average billing and returned to regular billing. This will be done around mid April to beginning of May depending on the weather. As days and nights stay above zero the frost will slowly leave the ground as this happens the frozen services will begin to thaw.

While I wait for water to be restored to my house where can I get water?

Residence impacted by water restrictions may get water and use the showers at one of the two recreation facilities located in Alliston and Tottenham.

New Tecumseth Recreation Centre
7300 Industrial Parkway, Alliston

Tottenham Community and Fitness Centre
139 Queen Street North, Tottenham

Water Temperature

With water temperatures already being cold when entering our distribution system it takes very little exposure too cold for water to freeze. This is why it is important for you to ensure that your water lines are not exposed to cold drafts during the winter months. As water temperatures approach 4°C the risk of freezing increases. Homeowners can choose to monitor their tap water temperature and when water reaches the 4°C you may choose to run your water to prevent freezing.

Frost Depth

This is the depth to which the Ground is frozen. With extreme cold temperatures and limited snow cover the frost travels deeper in the ground and closer to the buried infrastructure. Most water services are buried deep enough to be protected from the frost. Older, shallower services may be impacted in extremely cold dry winter conditions.

The frost stays in the ground until late spring. On the surface it may appear warm enough to stop the constant flow from a tap, but it can take several weeks of warm weather to thaw the ground sufficiently to prevent water service re-freezing. When requested by Town staff to leave a tap running to prevent a frozen service it is important to continue to do so until you are again requested by town staff to stop running the water continuously.

Public Works Office 905-729-0057 or 705-435-3900, and press "4"
Mon. – Fri., 8:30am to 4:30pm