

CITY OF KIMBALL
MUNICIPAL POLICY NUMBER 03-2019
POLICY ON THE PREVENTION AND UNFREEZING OF WATER AND
SEWER LINES

DATE COUNCIL APPROVED: November 5, 2019

UPDATED: January 4, 2022

Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to provide the City of Kimball's procedures to help eliminate frozen water and sewer lines and what happens in the event of frozen water and sewer lines. Procedures identified in this policy are intended to maintain City wide formality and to identify responsibility of maintenance and repair. The City will provide such maintenance in a safe and cost-effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel and environmental concerns.

Responsibilities:

- The City of Kimball is responsible for frozen water mains.
- The City of Kimball is responsible for frozen sewer mains.
- Property Owners are responsible for frozen water lateral (service) lines from the building to the water main and for all water lines within their building.
- Property Owners are responsible for frozen sewer lateral (service) lines from the building to the sewer main and for all sewer lines within their building.

Procedures:

When there are extreme cold and/or frost conditions and the risk of freezing water lines could occur, City Staff will start monitoring the temperature of the water going through all water meters that are of 5/8" size within the City. A general notification will be issued to affected property owners stating "how to protect water lines from freezing" and will be sent via e-mail and/or via telephone call to the most recent contact information on file at City Hall.

- Property owners will be contacted when the temperature of their water has reached 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
- After being contacted by **City Hall**, they **MUST** let a trickle of water run from one faucet throughout the day and night and continue to do so until the water temperature is steadily above 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Property owners **MUST** run their water at a continuous stream during this time. A trickle of water is equal to a pencil sized stream or pinkie width.
- The City will notify property owners when the weather conditions have changed to the point that it should no longer be necessary to run their water at a continuous stream.

Purpose:

Why Pipe Freezing is a Problem: Water has a unique property in that it expands as it freezes. This expansion puts tremendous pressure on whatever is containing it, including metal or plastic pipes. No matter the "strength" of a container, expanding water can cause pipes to break. Pipes that freeze most frequently are those that are exposed to severe cold, like outdoor hose bibs, swimming pool supply lines, water sprinkler lines, and water supply pipes in unheated interior areas like basements and crawl spaces, attics, garages or kitchen cabinets. Pipes that run against exterior walls that have little or no insulation are also subject to freezing. Warmer weather is not necessarily a good thing; sometimes it will only drive the frost down further, causing pipes to freeze.

Preventing Frozen Pipes:

Before the onset of cold weather, prevent freezing of these water supply lines and pipes by following these recommendations:

- Drain water from swimming pool and water sprinkler supply lines following manufacturer's or installer's directions. Do not put antifreeze in these lines unless directed. Antifreeze is environmentally harmful, and is dangerous to humans, pets, wildlife, and landscaping.
- Remove, drain, and store hoses used outdoors. Close inside valves supplying outdoor hose bibs. Open the outside hose bibs to allow water to drain. Keep the outside valve open so that any water remaining in the pipe can expand without causing the pipe to break.
- Check around the home for other areas where water supply lines are located in unheated areas. Look in the basement, crawl space, attic, garage, and under kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Both hot and cold-water pipes in these areas should be insulated.
- Consider installing specific products made to insulate water pipes like a "pipe sleeve" or installing UL listed "heat tape," "heat cable," or similar materials on exposed water pipes. Newspaper can provide some degree of insulation and protection to exposed pipes – even ¼" of newspaper can provide significant protection in areas that usually do not have frequent or prolonged temperatures below freezing.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.
- Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.
- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55° F.

Procedures for Thawing of Frozen Mains and Lines:

- If it is determined that the City Water and/or Sewer Main is frozen, the City will be responsible for thawing the Main only, **NOT** frozen plumbing pipes or laterals hooking up to the main.
- If it is determined that it is the lateral line that is frozen, the City will provide the property owner information of contractors to assist with thawing the pipe. The property owner shall be responsible for any thawing, digging, street repairs and other costs accrued while thawing the lateral line.
- The City will only allow the use of hot water or steam in its thawing operations. The use of electric pipe thawing machines or welding machines is strictly prohibited, and persons using these methods will be held liable for any damage caused.

Utility Bill Adjustments:

Any and all utility bill adjustments will occur in the following manner:

- Only those property owners that have been contacted by **City Hall** regarding running their water as stated above in the “**Procedures**” section will have their utility bill adjusted. Property owners that choose to contact another City Official instead of contacting City Hall directly **will not** have their utility bill adjusted.
- The continuous stream of water that residents are asked to run in the “**Procedures**” section amounts to approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ gallon of water per minute (10,800 gallons per month) per connection. This is the **maximum** gallon amount that a property will receive a utility bill adjustment for. The **only** exception to this rule, are the few properties within the City limits that the Utility Superintendent asks to run up to double this amount due to their location within the City located on specific water main areas.
- When calculating utility bill adjustments, the following method will be used: when billing for the current month, the current month’s usage will be compared to the same period from the prior year. If the prior year’s usage for the same period is more than the current month’s usage, no utility bill adjustment will be made. If the prior year’s usage for the same period is less than the current month’s usage, a utility bill adjustment will be made for the difference in gallons **not to exceed** 10,800 gallons. The **only** exception to the 10,800-gallon rule, are the few properties within the City limits that the Utility Superintendent asks to run up to double this amount due to their location within the City located on specific water main areas.

* **AT NO TIME WILL ANY ACCOUNT BE CREDITED NEGATIVE USAGE.**

Utility Bill Adjustment Examples:

- John Adams was contacted by City Hall as his water temperature was below 40 degrees Fahrenheit for the month of February 2020. He used 5,500 gallons. In February 2019, John Adams used 3,800 gallons. John Adams received a utility bill adjustment for 1,700 gallons.
- Martha Washington ran her water for the month of February 2020. She used 25,000 gallons. In February 2019, Martha Washington used 9,280 gallons. Martha Washington does not receive a utility bill adjustment for 10,800 gallons due to the fact that Martha Washington was not contacted by City Hall to run her water as the temperature was NOT below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Benjamin Franklin was contacted by City Hall regarding running his water for the month of February 2020 as his water temperature was 33 degrees Fahrenheit. He used 3,500 gallons. In February 2019, Benjamin Franklin used 3,800 gallons. Benjamin Franklin does not receive a utility bill adjustment due to the fact that he used less water in the current period than the prior year period.
- In February 2020, the City asked Susan Anthony to run her water at more than a pencil sized stream due to the fact that she is at the end of a water main in a City development on a stub street. She used 27,300 gallons. In February 2019, Susan Anthony used 6,200 gallons. Susan Anthony received a utility bill adjustment for 21,600 gallons.
- Abraham Lincoln was contacted by City Hall regarding letting his water run for the month of February 2020 as his water temperature was 38 degrees Fahrenheit. He used 5,500 gallons. In February 2019, Abraham Lincoln used 700 gallons. Abraham Lincoln received a utility bill adjustment for 4,800 gallons.

Payment of Invoices for Thawing Lateral Service Lines:

- As stated in “**Procedures for Thawing of Frozen Mains and Lines**”, if it is determined that it is the lateral (service) line that is frozen, the City will provide the property owner information of contractors to assist with thawing the pipe. The property owner shall be responsible for any thawing, digging, street repairs and other costs accrued while thawing the lateral (service) line. All invoices are to be paid directly by the property owner.
- The City **will not** reimburse property owners for any costs related to the thawing of lateral (service) lines for any property owner that **was not** contacted by City Hall regarding letting their water run at a continuous stream due to the temperature reaching 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
- The City may elect to reimburse property owners for the cost of thawing lateral (service) lines for property owners that **were** contacted by City Hall regarding running their water at a continuous stream due to the temperature reaching 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. The City may elect to reimburse property owners in an amount up to one-half (1/2) of the cost of the service, not to exceed \$250.00. The property owner must submit a copy of the invoice to the City for this reimbursement.

Temporary Water Service:

- If a lateral service line cannot be thawed at a property and a temporary water service is setup **by the City** to that property, the customer will be billed for their gallon usage based upon their usage for the same time period in the prior year.
- The City is not responsible for any injuries or liabilities resulting from property owners setting up their own temporary water service.
- Property owners are **strictly prohibited** from setting up their own temporary water services to fire hydrants.

Deviations from Policy:

The City Council reserves the right to deviate from this policy at any time if deemed to be in the best interests of the City and its residents based on safety and economic considerations. Any deviation and the reason for the deviation shall be documented in writing in the Council minutes of the meeting at which that decision was made.