

Homes Need Extra Care During Winter

Every winter we typically see a number of homes that have frozen meters, frozen laterals, or frozen pipes. While all three can be troublesome, most can be avoided.

Taking a little extra care around the house to make sure that doors and windows are closed, especially in basements where meters and pipes are normally located, can help eliminate problems with freeze-ups. If you have a finished basement, make sure that warm air can circulate around your water meter. Once temperatures dip to sub-zero range, and frost starts to drop down further in the ground, laterals can also freeze. Fortunately, this winter has been quite mild, and frozen laterals have not been a problem. Hoses should also be disconnected from outside faucets, even with freezeless faucets.

Property owners who spend winters in warmer climates should also arrange for a reliable friend or relative to come and check their home regularly. Only a night or two without heat can lower the temperature in your home enough to cause frozen pipes. Once the house starts to heat again, even just a simple crack can cause significant property damage and expense.

More information on protecting your home during the winter months can be found in *Professor Faucet's Winter Tips* column on page 2 of this newsletter.



Wastewater Utility Purchases New Trucks for Land Spreading Purposes

Recently, Wausau's Wastewater Treatment Plant upgraded its biosolids application fleet with two new spreading vehicles and a new loader for handling the biosolids, or "Black Gold".

In all, 10,598 cubic yards or 1,205 dry tons of Black Gold were applied on 47 different farm fields throughout Marathon County. The spreading of biosolids is overseen by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), with reports being submitted to the DNR annually.

Black Gold is spread at the agronomic rate to meet the nutrient requirement of the crop to be harvested. The Black Gold can only be spread on approved acreage with well drained soils to eliminate potential run-off. Set backs from residences and private wells are also adhered to, to prevent contamination and reduce odor complaints.

Historically, the Black Gold application program has been very successful in recycling nutrients back to the land and saving

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Professor Faucet's Winter Tips

Tip #1: Always protect pipes

from freezing! During winter months, it is important to remember that unprotected water pipes and water meters are vulnerable to freezing. To help prevent this problem, make sure that minimum heat (between 40-50 degrees Fahrenheit) is provided to basements or anywhere else where the water meter or pipes are located. Inspect these areas to make sure there are no water pipes near broken windows, open basement doors, or cracked basement foundations. Ol' man



winter is sure to allow a chilly draft to blow on exposed water pipes, causing

quick freeze-ups. In homes with improved basements, where water meters reside behind walls, open the wall space to allow ample air circulation and heat to flow around the meter. In older homes, pipes under kitchen and bathroom sinks that are located on outside walls are susceptible to freezing. Open the cupboard doors so that warm air can also help protect these pipes.

Tip #2: Thawing Frozen Pipes:

Before attempting to thaw a frozen pipe, the shut-off valve for the building plumbing should be located and operated. **This is important!** When thawing, if you were to discover that the pipe had a crack, you should immediately **shut off** the water supply. Shut-off valves are normally located on

either side of the water meter. If you cannot locate the shut-off valves, or they do not work, you may want to contact Wausau Water Works to shut your service



off at the curb. (Please note that we are required to charge a fee to turn the service back on, and that response may take some time, especially after our normal working hours.)

When thawing a frozen pipe, never use an open flame! It is much safer to direct the hot air from a hair dryer at the section of pipe that is blocked by ice. Heat tape can also be safely used to thaw out a frozen water pipe.

Tip #3 - Protect Vacant Homes and Businesses. If you own a home or business that is vacant, safeguards need to be in place to prevent freeze-ups.

- Maintain heat in all areas of the building, including the basement. Thermostats should be set at 50 degrees or higher.
- Leave doors open under sinks or other closed areas to circulate warm air.
- Turn off the water heater. If it is electric, turn it off completely. If it is gas, turn the controls to pilot.
- Unplug water softeners so that they won't regenerate.
- If you **DO NOT** have hot water or steam heat, turn the water off at the valve by the meter.
- If you shut off your water by the meter, open the hot and cold faucets in the kitchen sink.
- Have a trusted friend or relative check your vacant home periodically, more often during extreme cold snaps.

- If you will be gone for an extended period of time, or the property will be without heat, you should contact Wausau Water Works to have your water shut off at the curb and your meter removed. You can then drain and winterize your entire system. (Please note that we are required to charge a fee to turn the service back on, but it is considerably less than the cost of water used or property damage, if a pipe were to burst.)

Dripping Faucets Why Should I Fix?

Drips waste a precious product, and this waste

should be stopped, even though the dripping water may not register on your water meter. To find



out how much water you're wasting, put an 8-ounce measuring cup (or anything that will let you measure 8 ounces) under the drip and find out how many minutes it takes to fill it up. Divide the filling time into 90 (90 ÷ minutes to fill) to get the gallons of water wasted each day.

As an example, if you have a faucet that dripped 60 times a minute (once each second) this adds up to over 3 gallons each day or 1,225 gallons each year, enough to fill more than twenty-two 55-gallon drums, just from one dripping faucet. This leak would fill the 8-ounce measuring cup in less than 30 minutes.

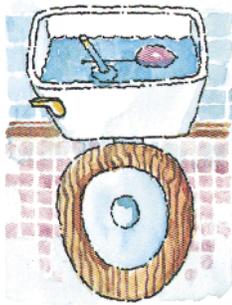
(Source: Plain Talk About Drinking Water - Fourth Edition - American Water Works Association)

A Brick in the Toilet - Does it Save Water?

Some people say that you should put a brick in the toilet tank to save water. How does that save water and is it a good idea??

Toilet flushing uses a lot of water, and putting something in the toilet tank that takes up space means that less water will be used each time the tank refills after a flush, but putting a brick in your toilet tank is **NOT** a good idea. A brick tends to crumble and might damage the toilet's flushing mechanism. Instead, use a glass jar, a plastic bag, or a jug filled with water (and make sure these items do not obstruct the normal operation of the toilet). Because some toilets require a certain volume of water to work right, be sure to test the toilet to make sure it's still flushing well after any changes. *NOTE: Never use your toilet as a trash can. Using several gallons of water to get rid of a tissue or a cigarette is very wasteful.*

Also, remember that toilet tanks can leak. To check, put a few drops of food coloring in the tank, wait about 15 minutes, and look in the bowl. If the food coloring shows up there, the tank is leaking and should be fixed. Toilets should be checked for leaks on a regular basis.



Source: Plain Talk About Drinking Water - Fourth Edition - American Water Works Association)

Fun Water Facts

- Although a person can live without food for more than a month, a person can only live without water for approximately one week.
- The average person in the United States uses 80 to 100 gallons of water each day. During medieval times a person used only 5 gallons per day.
- It takes about 2 gallons to brush your teeth, 2 to 7 gallons to flush a toilet, and 25 to 50 gallons to take a shower.
- It takes about 1 gallon of water to process a quarter pound of hamburger.
- It takes 2,072 gallons of water to make four new tires.
- The overall amount of water on our planet has remained the same for two billion years.
- In a 100-year period, a water molecule spends 98 years in the ocean, 20 months as ice, about 2 weeks in lakes and rivers, and less than a week in the atmosphere.
- Frozen water is 9% lighter than water, which is why ice floats on water.
- Approximately 66% of the human body consists of water. Water exists within all our organs and it is transported throughout our body to assist physical functions.
- Human brains are 75% water.
- Human bones are 25% water.
- Human blood is 83% water.
- 75% of a chicken is water.
- 80% of a pineapple is water
- Water leaves the stomach five minutes after consumption.
- A person pays about 25 cents for water use on a daily basis.
- Two thirds of the water used in a home is used in the bathroom.

Drive-by Meter Reading System Implemented



With approximately 12,000 radio transmitters installed, Wausau Water Works has implemented a mobile data collector to allow drive-by meter reading. The new system eliminates the need for a meter reader to walk up to each home or business, but rather to pick up the reads by simply driving through a neighborhood. Previously, it took anywhere from 7-10 days to read a billing cycle. The same area can now be read in less than 1 day.

With only about 3,000 radio units left to be installed in the City of Wausau, the project is expected to be completed by the summer of 2007.



Black Gold -

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participating farmers significant dollars by reducing commercial fertilizer costs.

Wausau Water Works' investment in this new equipment reinforces our commitment to continue providing cost effective nutrient recycling to area farmers in a safe and efficient manner for years to come.

If you are interested in participating, or would like more information on the Black Gold program, contact Gus Strehlo, Wastewater Superintendent, at 261-6941.

Hydrants Looking A Little Brighter These Days

Every summer hydrants throughout the City of Wausau get a fresh coat of paint thanks to seasonal employees and youth groups.

Unfortunately, by the next summer, many of those same hydrants were looking a little faded. Staff has found a new paint which gives a nicer appearance to the hydrants and holds its sheen for a longer period, reducing the amount of maintenance required.

Adopt a Hydrant

With storms like we had right before Christmas, fire hydrants can easily become buried under snow banks and drifts. Fire hydrants need a little extra care during the winter months to ensure their availability if an emergency were to arise.



Residents who would like to "adopt" a fire hydrant and keep it clear from snow should contact Dennis Geiger at 261-7262. A small appreciation gift will be given for your extra effort!