



City of River Falls News Release

For Immediate Release:

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EXTREME COLD TAKING A TOLL ON SERVICE LATERALS AND CUSTOMER WATER PIPING

February 6, 2014 – In the last month, River Falls Water Utility has responded to about a dozen frozen water pipe calls as compared to one during this same time period in 2013. Since the first of the year our utility has responded to water freezing issues in the exterior walls of homes, crawl spaces, and service laterals. A water service lateral is the line leading to a home from the street. These are typically buried about 8 feet in the ground and are the piece of the water system most difficult to ultimately control due to deep frost conditions.

Kevin Westhuis, Utilities director indicates, “Our crews report that the current frost line appears to be 6 feet below ground under bare areas, but as temperatures continue to plunge during the overnight hours, we expect that frost line to move deeper.”

“We are conducting routine system water temperature checks to make sure the water in River Falls’ mains and hydrants are well within the normal wintertime range. We also activity monitor and adjust water pumping and storage to keep the water in the system several degrees above freezing.”

If customers begin to notice discoloration in the water at their property, the water may be freezing as frost will dislodge particles from your pipes. If this is the case, let water run at the rate of a pencil thin stream to thaw the line. If discoloration continues, call the utility.

If your service lateral does freeze, the utility will attempt to thaw it. We offer this at no charge the first time it occurs at a customer location. We can only assist if the lateral is electrically conductive (metal pipe). Thawing is done during daylight hours. If it freezes up overnight and you call in to report it; a crew will be out in the morning. You may also choose to have a local plumber do this for you, at your cost.

Tips for homeowners

Water meters and pipes:

- Make sure your basement is properly insulated, and check for areas where cold air may be rushing in
- Insulate pipes in unheated areas like crawl spaces, unheated garages, and attics.
- Leave some heat on in unused areas of your home.
- Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame and keep flammables clear of heat sources.
- Open cabinets in kitchens and baths where pipes are on exterior walls to introduce heat.

Service laterals:

If your home's service lateral line has frozen in the past, it might be a good idea to run a pencil-thin stream of water during the times of day when you typically use very little water. If you're planning to go out of town for a week or more, you may want to call the utility and have your water service shut off at the curb. There is a \$40 fee for restoring service when you return.

Running your water continuously:

River Falls has been fortunate not to have experienced some of the severe freezing and extremely high numbers of freeze ups that other communities are reporting. At this time, the City **IS NOT** calling for **ALL** customers to run their water to prevent freezing as has been reported in other Wisconsin communities. We are monitoring the situation closely and will keep you informed.

If you are experiencing a problem with your water service, call the City of River Falls Utility Department at (715) 425-0906

For more information about the City of River Falls visit <http://www.rfcity.org>