

# **FROZEN WATER SERVICE POLICY**

## **1. Purpose**

It is the policy of the City of Red Wing to comply with all applicable state and federal regulatory requirements.

The City intends to provide effective and efficient maintenance to its water distribution system by evaluating political, social, safety, and economic concerns, among others.

As of 2014, the City has 102 miles of public water distribution mains, 976 fire hydrants and 6200 services within its water distribution system. Procedures identified in this policy are intended to maintain the City's water distribution system to prevent freeze ups, to extend the life of the system, and to identify responsibility for thawing frozen main and services, and for the cost of any repairs resulting from thawing. The City has developed and implemented this policy that takes into consideration public safety, the City's budget and personnel, environmental concerns, and the cost of implementation versus the benefit to be achieved. The City will use its employees, equipment and/or private contractors to provide this service on City owned mains. Owners of services shall use a licensed plumbing contractor for repairs on individual services.

While the City fully intends to meet the guidelines established in this policy, there may be times when this is not feasible. Issues including, but not limited to, budget constraints, critical equipment failure, or weather and other emergencies may prevent the City from meeting the guidelines established herein. The Director of Public Works or his or her designee may override provisions established within this policy. Deviations from the goals established in this policy will be documented.

The City will use this policy to guide any water distribution maintenance activities to be provided by a contractor or a party other than the City.

## **1. Maintenance and Inspection Goals**

### **A. Water Mains**

Scope of City's Responsibility - The City will maintain the components of the public water distribution system. This includes water distribution mains, valves, hydrants, and other components. Private property owners are responsible for the maintenance of water distribution components from their property up to and including the connection to the public system.

### **B. Water Services**

Chapter 3 of the City Code states "All persons taking the water shall keep their own service pipes, service corporations, stopcocks or curb stops and apparatus in good repair and protected from frost, at their own risk and expense. All water taken or used from the City water system, unless otherwise ordered by the City Council, must be metered and paid for,

except water used in putting out fire.”

### **C. Prevention**

The City has identified areas with a known history of frozen water services and has been identified in the Cities asset management system (Cartegraph). If the coldest temperature of your water drops to 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below, you may have an impending freeze up and the frost may be getting close to your service line. When this occurs, the Minnesota Rural Water Association suggests that property owners run a small stream of water at all times. A stream of water approximately the width of a pencil should allow the continued passage of water through your water lines. The City suggests that you leave the water running until the frost is out of the ground and the risk of freezing has passed.

The costs associated with this preventative measure would be incurred by the property owner; however it may be less expensive than the plumbing repairs needed if the water line freezes. This is at the property owners’ discretion. Your water utility bill will increase anywhere from approximately \$35 to \$200 per month, depending upon the size of the water stream and the amount of pressure in your area.

### **D. Thawing Frozen Pipes**

If water services do freeze, the City advises that you contact a plumber immediately. Once lines have been thawed, residents are advised to contact the City so that the issue can be documented. The expense incurred for the needed thawing, will be the responsibility of the property owner and can range from several hundred to a few thousand dollars depending on the length of your service and where thawing equipment can be hooked up. Other potential damage may occur during the freezing and thawing process, such as a cracked water line or stray voltage.

The property owner must notify the City regarding the method of thawing prior to any work taking place. The City has guidelines and procedures to follow for thawing services to help prevent cross contamination specifically on plastic water lines. Contractors shall be liable for any damage caused by thawing.

## **2. Personnel Responsibilities and Requirements**

### **A. Exercise of Professional Judgment**

It is expected that City employees, in accordance with their job duties and responsibilities, will exercise their professional judgment in the implementation of this policy. Further, it is expected that in emergency situations (see Emergency Response Policy) City employees will be required to exercise their discretion and weigh political, social, and economic considerations including but not limited to public and employee safety, the potential for damage to private property and the City sanitary sewer system, and environmental concerns.

### **B. Training and Education**

The City will provide training to employees responsible for maintenance of and emergency

response to issues with the water distribution system. Training of employees will include education necessary to earn and maintain appropriate operator certifications. Training will also address standard operating procedures, proper use of equipment, emergency response and other topics required by state and federal regulatory agencies.

#### **C. Work Schedule**

Full-time City employees in the Public Works Department will be expected to work eight-hour shifts. In emergencies, employees may be required to work in excess of eight hours. Budget and safety concerns may limit the length of time an employee is permitted to work.

#### **D. Weather Conditions**

Regular water distribution operations will be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the City employees and equipment. Factors that may delay water distribution operations include, but are not limited to: severe cold, severe heat, flooding, rain, snow and other severe weather events.

### **3. Documentation**

The City will document all of its inspection and maintenance activities and emergency responses for its water distribution system. The City will also document circumstances that limit its ability to comply with this policy. A report should be prepared periodically for the purpose of evaluating maintenance activities and for determining goals for the future. These records will be kept in accordance with the City's records retention schedule.

### **4. Public Education**

Periodically, the City will inform residents of their responsibilities related to the water distribution system. Information will be posted on the City website, Facebook, and flyers in the City utility bills. In extreme conditions, the City may draft a letter to residents with a known history of frozen services.