



# THE FLOW N' GO

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

JANUARY / FEBRUARY / MARCH 2015

## WHEN SECONDS COUNT, A BURIED FIRE HYDRANT CAN BECOME A DISASTER

Let's play a game. How quickly can you find the fire hydrant hidden in the picture below?



What's that, you say? You had a hard time seeing it buried under all that snow?

Well, so will the fire fighters who arrive to extinguish the fire that is quickly devouring the home of your next door neighbor.

As we all know, a delay of just seconds in getting water on a fire can mean the difference between minor damage and a home that is temporarily uninhabitable.

If this hydrant had to be used in an emergency, how long do you think it would take for the crew to dig out enough to access the hose connections? And if the snow had frozen over, there is no guarantee that the hydrant could be dug out at all without using heavy equip-

ment.

You can prevent this possibility by making sure that you don't blow or shovel the snow from your driveway against the fire hydrant. If you are lucky enough to have a contractor plow your driveway, make sure that he or she knows not to bury the hydrant.

And if you do block the hydrant? Not only are you putting property and lives (possibly your own) in danger, you are also putting your wallet in danger—of being a bit lighter.

Article III, Section 162-9 of the Town of Marblehead By-Laws provides that, "No person shall deposit or cause to be deposited any snow and/or ice on or against a fire hydrant or on any sidewalk or roadway." Further, Section 162-10 states that, "Whoever violates any section or provisions of this By-Law shall be liable to a penalty of \$50.00 for each offense."

Ouch! That's really a pain in the assets.

Unfortunately, hydrants do sometimes get buried by the street plows. This is an unavoidable consequence of

keeping the streets passable and safe.

While departments do their best shoveling out the over 850 hydrants in town, there are other storm-related issues that they need to deal with as well. These include clearing the piles of snow from intersections so motorists can see oncoming traffic, plowing and sanding school parking areas and opening cross-walks so that our students will be safe and clearing snow-covered storm drains to prevent flooding from rains and melting snow. (Please see *Tip of the Quarter*, above right.)

All this, while still handling the normal day-to-day calls and work demands of the various departments.

That's why it's important that you—but only if you are physically able—take shovel in hand and clear the snow and ice from hydrants near your house. (And, be a good neighbor by assisting those who are not able to shovel.)

The property—and life—you may save if a fire should strike could be your own.

## TIP OF THE QUARTER

... AND DON'T

*FORGET THE DRAINS*

While you are shoveling the hydrants, don't forget to clear the storm drains of snow and ice.

Rain and water from melting snow piles can't make it down a blocked drain and can result in flooding of streets and basements.

Keep storm drains clear!

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## DROPPING TEMPS CAN LEAD TO BURST WATER PIPES

Take a glance out your window, thru the intricate design left on the pane by Jack Frost. The newly-fallen snow lends a purity to the landscape and the icicles hanging from tree branches glisten like diamonds.

This Winter Wonderland scene is one of the few benefits of the season—as long as it is on the outside.

If Jack Frost and icicles make an appearance on your inside water pipes, it isn't so wonderful. (And if the snow makes its way inside, you had better call a roofer—ASAP.)



Winter here in New England means sub-freezing temperatures—often falling below zero. This, itself, poses all sorts of issues for property owners. Besides escalating heating bills, we are faced with the possibility of a frozen water meter or pipes.

Water meters and pipes, even though located inside, can freeze within hours if exposed to cold air, especially when temperatures are below freezing for an extended period of time.

It is the responsibility of the property owner to protect their meter and pipes from freezing.

Pipes most susceptible to freezing are often found in unheated attics, basements and crawl spaces; in an outside wall; and under a sink on an outside wall.

So, how do you know if you have a frozen pipe? The most obvious indication is a lack of running water. If the pipe is frozen then the water is blocked from making it to your faucet.

Another way to tell that your pipe may be frozen is if Jack (Frost) has left his calling card on the exterior of the pipe—like the one to the left.

Now for the science lesson:  $H_2O$  (water) + 32 degrees (temperature) = frozen  $H_2O$  (ice). When water freezes in a pipe, pressure in excess of 2,000 pounds per square inch is created between the closed faucet and the blockage. This pressure is enough to rupture most any pipe, creating a split similar to the photo to the right, above.

When the pipe bursts it will send several hundred gallons of water each hour gushing into your residence. That can mean hundreds of dollars in water and sewer bills and thousands of dollars in repairs.

All this damage and unnecessary expense would be so easy to avoid simply by taking a few preventive measures.

### *Before the cold arrives:*

- ◆ Eliminate sources of cold

drafts near water lines and the meter by repairing broken windows, insulating walls, filling cracks in walls and around windows;

- ◆ Install storm windows in basement areas and wrap pipes and the meter with insulation;
- ◆ Know the location of your water service shut-off valve; and
- ◆ Turn off outside water connections at the interior valve and drain the system.

### *When the cold is here:*

- ◆ Open interior doors to rooms where the pipes and meter are located to allow warm air to circulate around them;
- ◆ Open cabinet doors below sinks to allow warm air to circulate around those pipes;
- ◆ Allow a small trickle of water to run overnight to keep the pipes from freezing. (Here's that science lesson again: flowing water can break up ice crystals as they form on the inside of pipes.) The cost of the extra water is low compared to the cost to repair a burst pipe. (You could even collect the dripping water in a bucket placed inside the sink and use it to water your house plants.)

### *If the pipes are frozen:*



- ◆ First, you know that service shut-off valve we asked you to locate? Now is the time to shut it off.
- ◆ Next, call a plumber.
- ◆ If you are more of a “do-it-yourselfer” you could try thawing the pipes. Using a hair dryer, blow warm air on the pipes starting nearest to the faucet and work out towards the frozen section. (Do not leave the dryer unattended or allow it to overheat.)
- ◆ Place an electric space heater near the frozen pipe — but don't leave it unattended. And NEVER use kerosene heaters indoors.
- ◆ NEVER use a torch or open flame to thaw pipes. Open flame torches are the most common cause of pipe thawing - related home fires.

If your meter is frozen, you or your plumber will need to contact the water department to have it replaced (at your expense). Remember, only water department personnel are allowed to remove or install a water meter. Tampering with a meter by anyone else is unlawful.

Don't you just love winter?