



TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Jennifer Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer
Alyshia Neuman, Manager of Works and Operations
Lovely Magnaye, Manager of Finance

DATE: February 9, 2021

RE: **Frozen Utility Services Policy Draft**

ISSUE:

A draft policy has been developed to provide guidance for Administration regarding frozen utility services during the winter months.

BACKGROUND:

Section 11 of Bylaw No. 05-18 states that where the Town deems it fiscally or structurally appropriate, the Town of Wadena may install a drip line or running water to reduce the likelihood of lines freezing. Section 12 of the Bylaw provides that from the time that the drip line or running water has been turned on until it is turned off the account will be billed the minimum billing or the average of the two billing periods whichever is more.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1) Committee of the Whole can recommend approval of Policy No. U-003.
- 2) Committee of the Whole can provide feedback and direct changes to the draft policy No. U-003.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The dripline program does have financial implications. There are costs associated with producing treated water which essentially runs directly to waste, staff time to implement the program including managing the waivers and turning driplines on and off, and the staff time associated with providing line thawing services.

ANALYSIS:

There are several locations in Town that are susceptible to water line freezing. Administration cannot trace back when the Town started the dripline practice but there has never been a guiding policy or procedure in place. In 2019, the Town experienced several requests for thawing of frozen services from ratepayers. With no policy in place, Council ultimately ended up voiding all invoices to residents for line thawing and assumed the cost.

Some of the challenges that Administration encountered in the past are questions like who should be on the dripline list and how does the Manager determine the risk of having a frozen water line. It has always been up to the discretion of the Manager to determine who will be on the running water order list; however, there was no accurate list kept on file due to staff turnover.

As of this date, there are 30 accounts listed in the running water order list. Based on previous year's records, the highest consumption was 1,385 cubic metres or 304,781 gallons with a corresponding amount of \$2,635. In 2020, the Town of Wadena lost \$10,237.22 in revenue from December 1 to May 31, 2020 on the 29 customers that were charged minimum billing that year, not including the staff time in dealing with frozen water lines and turning on and off drip lines as well as the expenditure to produce potable water and processing of the wastewater.

Another concern that should be considered is the number of driplines that have been installed in Wadena that are not on the running water order list. Administration is aware of several properties that have a dripline installed before the meter and are not on the list. These properties are paying for their actual usage, but the Town has no control over when it is turned on and off, and the amount of water that may, or may not, be produced that is flowing to waste.

While there are legitimate reasons to have a dripline program, there also needs to be clear direction on the when a dripline is necessary, when it should be in effect, and how it is to be monitored in order to limit the financial implications to the Town.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Committee of the Whole provide feedback to Administration on the draft policy.

ATTACHMENTS:

DRAFT Policy Frozen Utility Services Policy



POLICY NAME: Frozen Utility Services		LAST UPDATED: XXX XX, 2021	
		SUPERSEDES POLICY: Not applicable	
POLICY AREA: Water & Sewer Utility Services U	POLICY NUMBER: U-003	APPROVAL DATE: XXX XX, 2021	PAGE: 1 of 3

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Frozen Utility Services Policy is to provide direction in preventing and managing interruptions to the municipal utility system caused by the freezing of services.

SCOPE

This policy applies to both residential and commercial properties within the Town of Wadena.

DEFINITIONS

Customer - any property owner who has an active utility account with the Town of Wadena.

Dripline - means the device allowing water to constantly run on a household or commercial tap.

Main - means the water and/or sewer main pipeline located under the street.

MWO - means the Manager of the Works and Operations department of their designate.

Returning Customer – means a customer that is included in the running water order list prior to the adoption of this policy or those who have been added to said list after two years of consecutive freezing.

Service - means the water and/or sewer service pipeline that is located from the mains in the street to the building and which services that individual property.

Temporary Water Service Line - a temporary supply of water to a customer who is without water due to frozen water pipes.

Vulnerable Customer - includes but is not limited to health care facilities, nursing homes, schools, daycares, and residents with special needs.

POLICY

1. Water and sewer services from the lateral main to the building is the responsibility of the property owner in accordance with the Town's Sewer and Water Line Repair Policy.
2. Frozen service requests received by the Town will be prioritized in the order they are received, except for vulnerable customers who will be placed at the top of the priority list. Upon receipt of a service request, Town staff will initiate response within twenty-four (24) hours, where feasible.
3. If the Town is unable to respond within the timeframe required by the customer, the customer may hire a contractor at their own expense, even if the frozen pipe is found to be on municipal property.

4. The use of welders and torches are strictly prohibited for thawing Town water lines.
5. When utility services are determined to have frozen on private property, the property owner will be responsible for all costs associated with the thawing process in accordance with the Town's Fees and Charges Bylaw. When utility services are determined to have frozen on municipal property, or when the origin of the frozen service cannot be determined, the municipality will be responsible for all costs associated with the thawing process.
6. Any unpaid invoices as of December 31st of the year the work was completed will be transferred to the customer's property tax account.
7. Customers advised to let their water run but do not follow the instructions provided by the Town or turns off the water for any period, are responsible for all costs incurred if the water service freezes. The customer also shall be responsible for any damage caused to the municipal property caused by negligence.
8. A record is kept of all properties that have had frozen services, beginning in 2020.
9. Customers providing a temporary water service, approved in accordance with the Waterworks Management Bylaw, will be billed the average of the last three billing periods.
10. A customer must have had two (2) consecutive years of freezing before a dripline is installed or a running water order can be issued.
11. All dripline and running water requests must be approved by the MWO, prior to the dripline being installed and a custom work order must be completed.
12. Driplines must be installed by a plumber after the water meter at the customer's expense. The costs of all contractor's expenses for installation and material of the dripline shall be billed directly to the customer by the contractor. The dripline will be inspected by the Town after installation to ensure compliance.
13. Where a dripline cannot be installed, it may be recommended by the MWO to run a constant stream of cold water from a tap in the building. The stream of water should be approximately the size of a drinking straw (0.5 cm or ¼ inches in diameter). It is the customer's responsibility to ensure that water is run in accordance with the guidelines set out in dripline/running water waiver form. Customers will be billed in accordance with the Town's Water and Sewer Rates Bylaw.
14. A dripline/running water waiver form must be completed by the customer annually, including an actual meter read taken at time of connection, and signed by the owner and the Town employee turning on the dripline. Customers that fail to sign the waiver will be billed according to actual consumption.
15. Driplines and running water will be turned on by December 20th each year, or earlier if the frost line reaches 1.2 m (4 ft) in depth, at the discretion of the MWO.
16. Driplines and running water are turned off at the discretion of the Town in accordance with the Town's Water and Sewer Rates Bylaw.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

P2010-002 Sewer and Water Line Repair Policy
Waterworks Management Bylaw No. 2018-16
Water and Sewer Rates Bylaw No. 2018-05
Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 2021-01
(Including any subsequent amendments to policies or bylaws).