

Epcor crews busy thawing frozen pipes

Company fielding more calls from homeowners this winter

BY NATHAN LIEWICKI, EDMONTON JOURNAL

Published: Saturday, March 12, 2011

The long, cold and dreary winter could leave some Edmonton homeowners in another bind as the mercury climbs and snow begins to melt.

Epcor has received dozens of calls from homeowners complaining of frozen water lines, and that number is expected to increase in the days and weeks ahead.

Epcor spokesman Tim le Riche said the utility company has had more calls than usual this winter, but crews are doing what they can to thaw out water lines.

"We will help homeowners if we have the crews available, but we will never leave them without water, even if that means leaving them a temporary water line," le Riche said.

The first time crews thaw water lines on private property is free of charge, but a \$250 per hour cost will be associated with each additional visit.

Homeowners can also hire plumbers, but le Riche said the sooner a frozen water line is dealt with the easier it will be to be thawed.

"The most important thing is to keep the water moving in through the house," le Riche said.

"You could be close to a freeze up if the flow rate is less, so that might be a signal."

Harmcor Plumbing & Heating Ltd. owner Roy Csuhaný hasn't recently received a lot of calls about frozen pipes, but said property owners need to pay attention to their water lines and take the necessary steps to prevent damages.

"If you're ever in doubt turn off your water meter," said Csuhaný.

He also warns people against using an open flame or torch to thaw frozen pipes.

On March 12, 2003, Cshany fielded a call from Ashbury Apartments, near 105th Street and 97th Avenue.

The complex hastily wanted their water lines unfrozen.

Building management got impatient and before one of Cshany's technicians arrived, the building went up in flames with damage estimated at \$2 million.

The fire broke out after a maintenance man tried to thaw a frozen pipe with a torch and the cardboard insulation caught on fire.

Cshany said people should wait for plumbers, who use the proper tools.

"We use an electrical thawing machine which sends an electrical current through copper, steel and galvanized pipes and heats it up," he said.

"Call a plumber because they are professionals."

nliewicki@edmontonjournal.com