

For Immediate Release

Port Colborne fire at 108 Sugarloaf Street

Careless use of heating device causes City to urge residents to thaw frozen pipes safely

Port Colborne, ON (Jan. 17, 2019) – At 11:28 a.m. Port Colborne Fire & Emergency Services were dispatched to a house fire at 108 Sugarloaf Street (corner of Sugarloaf Street and David Street). Sugarloaf Street was closed for crews to access a hydrant at the corner of Steele Street and Sugarloaf Street. The cause of the fire was due to careless use of a heating device to thaw an external frozen pipe.

18 personnel were on scene throughout the course of the fire. “Our firefighters did an amazing job fighting a fire in a very difficult situation, given the smoke conditions, the extensive fire that had spread within the floors and walls of the lower portion of the home, and the cold weather,” said Thomas B. Cartwright, Fire Chief. “We appreciate the assistance of Niagara EMS, Niagara Regional Police Services and our Operations Department during the course of this fire”.

The estimated dollar loss from this fire is in excess of \$400,000. There were no injuries to the homeowner or firefighting personnel.

Port Colborne Fire & Emergency Services does not advise the use of an open flame (i.e. blow torch, lighter) to thaw frozen water pipes, unless done by a professional who knows what safety procedures are required. Additionally, the use of welding equipment (to heat up pipes) adds additional hazards when attempting to thaw frozen pipes as the heat being radiated through the pipes can cause fires within a building.

The City of Port Colborne is reminding residents to take steps to prevent drinking water pipes in their property from freezing.

To avoid frozen water pipes in your home, consider the following suggestions:

- Open kitchen, bathroom and laundry cabinet doors to allow warm air to circulate around plumbing.
- Outdoor faucets are the first to freeze. Disconnect, drain, and shut off any outdoor hoses and faucets.
- Insulate pipes most prone to freezing, especially near outside walls and in crawl spaces, attic and garage, with a pipe sleeve.
- If your pipes are prone to freezing, consider contacting a plumber for advice on how best to protect your home.
- Leave a tap open enough for a pencil-thin stream of flowing water, so there is some movement of water in pipes that might be vulnerable to freezing.
- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.

If your pipes are already frozen, consider the following steps to thaw them:

- If you have a poorly insulated crawlspace, the frozen pipe may be in this area.
- Turn on a tap in the lowest point in the house (i.e. the cold water faucet in the basement).
- Use a blow dryer for one to two hours to warm the suspected frozen pipe. Check the blow dryer regularly to ensure it does not overheat.
- Place a warm towel or rag around the suspected frozen pipe.
- Depending on the outside temperature and the extent of freezing within the pipe, the thawing process could take between one and six hours.

Note that the City of Port Colborne is responsible for frozen water lines from the property line to the watermain, while property owners are responsible for the water line from the property line to the building, and for all internal plumbing.

To learn more about frozen water pipes, visit:

http://portcolborne.ca/page/frozen_water_service

About City of Port Colborne

Located on the south coast of the scenic Niagara Region, Niagara's Port of Call has found the perfect balance – successful industrial and commercial sectors, comfortable and scenic residential areas, white sand beaches, unique culinary choices, the world class Sugarloaf Marina, fishing, golfing, trails, shopping districts along the historic Welland Canal and an energized festival and entertainment scene that includes live theatre – truly a community that adds to the overall Niagara Experience.

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