



2990 S. Pine Tree Rd.
Hobart, WI 54155
Phone (920) 869-3807
Fax (920) 869-3808

Jerry Lancelle
Public Works and Utility Coordinator
Email Jerry@Hobart-WI.org

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Preventing Compression Fitting from Dislodging from Plastic Water Piping

Dear Hobart Resident,

Concern

In the past, the Village has responded to an Emergency Water Shut Off request as a result of a water service shut off valve between the water meter and the foundation (where the water lateral enters the building) dislodging from the **plastic water service**. When this happens, the only way to shut off the water is to close the valve (curb stop) on the water lateral supplying the building.

As you may recognize, this takes some time for Village staff to respond to such an emergency, increasing the potential for water damage. Worse yet, this can happen at inopportune times, such as when residents/occupants are away, increasing the duration of flooding. Therefore, the Village recommends all Water Utility customers investigate the integrity of their water shut off connections as well as any other water system compression fittings.

What Causes Compression Fitting to Come Loose?

When plastic water piping first became popular (versus copper) in the late 80's, early 90's, there was not a recognition by manufacturers or others of the potential for compression fittings (including water shut-off valves) to eventually "work" loose as a result of vibrations (water hammer) caused through normal, everyday use of a building's water system. Simply turning faucets on and off creates vibrations or water hammer, creating short term fluctuations in water pressure on the water system. Over time, this can cause compression fittings to work loose.

Industry Response

The manufacturing industry responded to this issue by recommending and/or requiring a stiffening insert (stiffener) to be placed inside the water line prior to installing a compression fitting. The insert maintains the shape of the water line and provides resistance to the compression fitting, negating the plastic water line's tendency to deform due to the pressure of the compression fitting. It should be noted, to the Village's knowledge, there was not any recall or retroactive mandate to retrofit existing installations with stiffeners.

Unfortunately experience has demonstrated there are installations in existence where these stiffeners were not or have not yet been installed, which could result in compression fittings dislodging from the plastic pipe.

Recommended Action

Since there is no external visible indicator to identify if stiffeners were used, Village staff recommends property owners investigate whether installed compression fittings employed measures to prevent the described failure. The Village recommends:

1. If available, contacting the plumber or utility contractor that installed the plastic water lateral or piping system to identify if they have records or knowledge regarding if compression fittings were installed with stiffeners.
2. If the aforementioned action is not an option, it is then recommended to consult with a plumbing contractor of your choice regarding this issue.

What is the Village's Role?

The shut off valve and fittings on both sides of the meter are installed by a plumbing contractor when the water service lateral and building water distribution system is installed. The Village plays no role in this installation other than to install, connect the water meter onto the fitting provided by the contractor.

However, if it is determined further investigation is needed to identify any "at risk" compression fittings and if it is necessary to have the water service shut off by the Village (as will be the case to investigate the shut off valve between the water service entry and water meter,) your contractor will need to set up an appointment through the Village Utility Clerk at 920-869-3803 temporarily shut off the water to enable the plumber to perform his work. Please note, the Village will waive any service fees if we are advised the request is related to this issue.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Jerry Lancelle
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