

55 Jackson homes lose water after line breaks

*By Kevin Huelsmann, Jackson Hole, Wyo.
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Below-freezing temperatures caused a water line at Snow King Estates to burst early Wednesday morning, leaving about 55 homes without water.

Town of Jackson staff and several contractors spent all of Wednesday trying to dig out the pipe so they could replace the portion that broke.

"The freeze gets down in the soil to the pipe and gets into the joints and then things just go," town engineer Shawn O'Malley said.

O'Malley said town staff shut off the supply line, which serves upper Snow King Estates and portions of Upper Cache Creek Drive, after someone noticed water running down a driveway in Snow King Estates.

About 4 p.m. Wednesday, town crews and several contractors were still digging near the top of the neighborhood and had yet to expose the pipe.

"We're passing out fliers letting everyone know that we're working but that we don't know when we'll be done," O'Malley said. "We're going to go until we get it done."

The temperature dipped down to about 4 below zero Wednesday and was expected to drop to about minus 15 today, said Tom Dunham, a local weather observer.

"That pipe probably burst because of the past few nights we've had," Dunham said. "In town, it's been below zero the last three nights, and in the last nine days it only got up to 23 degrees."

On Wednesday, the town issued a public service announcement reminding homeowners to keep a "pencil-thin" stream of water running to prevent their pipes from freezing.

The warning was in response to the increasing number of reports of frozen water pipes the town public works department has received recently.

O'Malley said crews would likely work through the night to replace the broken section of pipe in Snow King Estates.

"Guys are changing their socks and switching out their boots to stay dry and keep warm," O'Malley said Wednesday. "It's going to be a long night."