CALGARY PLUMBING PRO

Leaks & Repairs

Leaking pipes, fittings and shut-off valves, frozen and burst pipes, low water pressure, running toilets and urgent repairs in Calgary homes

4 Expert Answers from Plumbing IQ

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Q1

Pipe froze in the exterior wall of my Calgary kitchen, now what?

A frozen pipe in an exterior kitchen wall can thaw without bursting, but if the pipe has already split, the repair is billed at the plumber's rate of roughly **$85 to $150 an hour** plus a call-out fee, and the total rises if the wall has to be opened to reach the damage.

What to do right now

First, find your main water shut-off and know where it is. If the pipe has already burst and water is flowing, close that valve immediately. If the pipe is still frozen but intact, the City of Calgary advises working from the tap back toward the frozen section using a hair dryer, a heating pad or hot towels. Never use an open flame to thaw a pipe: it is a fire risk and can damage the pipe further.

Keep the kitchen cabinet doors open so warm air reaches the pipes behind them, and keep the house at 15°C or higher. If you have a trickle of water at the tap, let it run slowly while you warm the pipe.

If water is near your electrical panel, outlets or light fixtures, get everyone out of the house and call emergency services from outside.

What drives the repair cost

If the pipe thaws without splitting, you may owe only a service call, often $50 to $150, plus an hour or two of labour at roughly $85 to $150 an hour during the day. If the pipe has cracked, the plumber needs to cut out the damaged section and splice in new pipe. The real cost driver is access: an exterior kitchen wall often means opening drywall, and drywall patching and painting are usually quoted separately. Ask upfront whether wall repair is included or whether you need a drywaller afterward.

The plumber will also look at why the pipe froze in the first place. Pipes in exterior walls freeze when cold reaches them, so the plumber will look at insulation and how the pipe is routed. Insulating the pipe or rerouting it away from the cold zone is the lasting fix; a patch alone may leave you in the same situation next winter.

Permits and what to ask

A like-for-like pipe repair that does not alter the plumbing system generally does not require a permit under Alberta's Permit Regulation. However, if the plumber reroutes the pipe, adds new piping or changes the configuration, a plumbing permit from the City of Calgary would be needed. The City of Calgary homeowner permit fee is $116.50 for plumbing work you do yourself in a home you own and occupy; a contractor pulls their own permit, and the fee is based on construction value with a $116.50 minimum.

Before hiring, ask to see the plumber's trade certificate (plumbing is a compulsory trade in Alberta), confirm they carry WCB-Alberta coverage with a clearance letter, and if any deposit is required before the work is finished, check that they hold an Alberta prepaid contracting licence through Service Alberta. Get the scope, the hourly rate or fixed price, wall-opening and patching terms, and the warranty in writing before anyone starts.

When you get quotes, ask each plumber directly: does this repair need a permit, and if so, who pulls it and schedules the inspection?

Q2

Hissing sound in the wall but no visible leak in Calgary, what is it?

A hissing sound inside a wall with no visible leak is worth taking seriously, because the two most common sources are a pressurised water leak and a gas leak, and one of them is a safety emergency.

What the sound is likely telling you

If you smell rotten eggs or a sulphur-like odour alongside the hissing, get everyone out of the house immediately and call emergency services from outside. That combination points to a natural gas leak, which is distributed in Calgary by ATCO Gas. Do not switch lights, appliances or the furnace on or off, and do not look for the source yourself. Gas work in Calgary requires a certified gasfitter and a gas permit from the City of Calgary; a homeowner cannot obtain a gas permit unless they hold an Alberta journeyman gasfitter certificate.

If there is no gas smell, the sound is more likely a water supply issue. Pressurised water leaking through a small crack or pinhole in a copper or PEX supply line can produce a steady hiss even when no water is visible yet, because the drywall absorbs it before it reaches the floor. A partially closed or failing shut-off valve, a pressure-reducing valve (PRV) that is wearing out, or water pressure that is simply too high can all create a similar sound. Calgary's water is hard, and scale buildup inside fittings or valves is one possibility a plumber will check.

A few things you can do right now without opening the wall: check the water meter. If the dial or the small triangle on the face is moving while every tap and appliance in the house is off, water is escaping somewhere in the system. If your home has a pressure gauge near the main shut-off, note the reading for the plumber.

What a plumber will do

A plumber will use an acoustic listening device or a thermal camera to locate the sound source without opening the wall unnecessarily. If a leak is confirmed, the repair cost depends on what is leaking and where: a valve or fitting replacement is a straightforward job, while a pinhole in a supply line behind finished drywall adds access and

patching time. Hourly rates in Calgary run roughly $85 to $150 during the day, with a common call-out fee of $50 to $150 on top. If the plumber finds the piping itself needs replacing, that is a separate conversation with a wider price range.

Permits and certification

Repairing or replacing a leaking fitting or valve without changing the pipe layout does not require a plumbing permit under the Alberta Permit Regulation. If the pipe itself needs to be altered or extended, the City of Calgary requires a plumbing permit. The plumber should tell you upfront whether the scope triggers one and who will pull it.

What to ask before work starts

Ask the plumber to describe what they found with the listening or thermal equipment before anything is opened. Get a written quote that covers the diagnostic, the repair scope, whether drywall patching is included, and the warranty on parts and labour. Confirm the plumber holds a valid Alberta trade certificate and, if any deposit is requested before the work is complete, that the business holds an Alberta prepaid contracting licence through Service Alberta.

Until someone has found the source, keep an eye on the water meter: it is the simplest way to tell whether the leak is still running.

Q3

Pinhole leaks in copper pipes, what causes them in Calgary homes?

Pinhole leaks in copper pipe usually come from corrosion that starts on the inside of the pipe wall, and there is rarely one cause that applies to every house. A plumber works out which of several possibilities fits yours by looking at where the leak is, how old the pipe is and what the failed section looks like.

What a plumber checks

The usual suspects are the water's chemistry, fast-moving water where a pipe is undersized or a valve is partly closed, and leftover soldering flux near joints. Calgary's water is hard (the City reports roughly 141 to 274 mg/L depending on the treatment plant and the season), which is worth mentioning to the plumber along with whether you have a softener.

For copper buried in the ground or under a slab, contact with soil or concrete is another possibility the plumber will look at.

Age is a factor but not the only one: some old copper is still sound, and some newer copper fails early.

A single pinhole is a warning, not just a repair. If the conditions that caused it have been present for years, other sections of the same pipe have been exposed to the same chemistry for the same amount of time.

What a plumber should do

A plumber who finds a pinhole should ask how old the pipe is, whether there have been other leaks nearby, and whether you have a water softener. A camera or pressure test on the supply lines can show whether the corrosion is isolated or widespread. If several sections are affected, a partial or whole-house repipe in PEX or copper may be more economical than chasing individual leaks; whole-house repipes in Calgary typically run $8,000 to $15,000, with most homes landing between $10,000 and $13,000. A single spot repair is far less, priced at the plumber's hourly rate of roughly $85 to $150 during the day plus a call-out fee, and the plumber will quote it after seeing the pipe.

A small repair that does not alter the piping system is generally not permit work, while altering or adding to the piping needs a plumbing permit from the City of Calgary; a homeowner who owns and lives in the home may take it out for work they do themselves. If you are unsure which applies, ask the City.

Before you call anyone, locate your main water shut-off inside the house and make sure you can close it quickly. If a pinhole is actively dripping, shutting off the supply to that fixture or closing the main is the right first move, and it is something you can do safely right now.

Q4

Shower leaking into the room below in my Calgary home, source?

Shower leaks that show up in the room below are almost always one of four things, and pinning down which one matters before anyone opens a ceiling or wall.

Where the water is actually coming from

The most common source is the shower pan or liner. In a tiled shower, the waterproof liner sits beneath the tile and mortar bed; a crack, a failed seam or a deteriorated drain collar lets water through slowly, and it travels along the subfloor before dripping through to the ceiling below. You may not see standing water in the shower itself, which is what makes this one deceptive.

The second source is the drain assembly. The connection between the drain body and the liner, or between the drain and the drain pipe below, can work loose over time. A slow drip here only happens when the shower runs, so the staining below tends to appear after showers rather than continuously.

Third is the supply plumbing: the valve body, the shower arm connection at the wall, or a fitting behind the tile. A supply leak runs whenever the water is on and sometimes between uses if a cartridge is failing. This one is more urgent because it can wet framing and insulation continuously.

Fourth, and often overlooked, is the grout and caulk. Failed grout joints or a cracked caulk bead at the wall-to-floor junction let water into the substrate during every shower. This is slower damage, and it shows up more as tile and grout age.

A plumber's first step is to isolate which source it is before cutting anything open. A simple dye test (food colouring in the drain area) can confirm whether the liner is holding. Running the shower with the drain plugged tests the pan separately from the drain pipe. Running only the supply without the drain open tests the valve and supply connections.

On the ceiling side, the location of the stain relative to the drain and the supply valve gives a plumber a strong starting clue. A stain directly below the drain points to the drain assembly or liner; a stain toward the wall where the valve sits points to supply plumbing.

Permit and who should do the work.

Paid work on the shower valve and drain piping in Calgary is for a certified journeyperson plumber or a registered apprentice working under one, under Alberta's Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act. Under Alberta's Permit Regulation, changing a valve, trap or fixture without changing the piping does not need a plumbing permit;

altering or adding to the piping does, and the City of Calgary issues that permit. The plumber should confirm which applies once the source is found.

Before hiring, ask to see the plumber's trade certificate and a WCB-Alberta clearance letter, and check that any deposit is covered by an Alberta prepaid contracting licence (Service Alberta).

A written quote for this job should include the diagnostic method, the scope once the source is confirmed, whether the ceiling or wall will be opened and by how much, who patches it afterward, the permit if one is needed, and the labour warranty. When you have two quotes side by side, compare those line items rather than the totals, because a quote that excludes ceiling patching or the permit can look cheaper while costing more in the end.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Calgary Plumbing Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority (the City of Calgary or your own municipality) before starting any plumbing or gas project. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **calgaryplumbingpro.com** for the latest answers.