

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING

Emergencies

Burst pipes, floods, and what to do before the
plumber arrives

7 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawaplumbingpro.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Is a dripping faucet an emergency?

A dripping faucet is generally **not a plumbing emergency**, but it's also not something you should ignore indefinitely. It won't cause immediate water damage the way a burst pipe would, but it does have real consequences if left unaddressed.

The most immediate impact is **wasted water and higher utility bills**. A faucet dripping once per second wastes roughly 3,000 gallons of water per year — that adds up on your Ottawa water bill. Beyond the cost, a persistent drip often signals a worn washer, O-ring, or cartridge that will only get worse over time. What starts as a minor drip can eventually become a steady stream or cause mineral buildup that damages the valve seat, turning a simple \$150–\$300 repair into a more involved job.

When a dripping faucet becomes more urgent is when it's accompanied by other symptoms — low water pressure throughout the home, water that's discoloured, or visible corrosion around the fixture. These can point to a deeper issue with your pipes or water supply that warrants faster attention.

For most homeowners, replacing a faucet cartridge or washer is a manageable DIY task if you're comfortable shutting off the supply valve and working with basic tools. However, if the drip is coming from the base of the faucet, from the supply lines underneath, or if you have older galvanized or copper pipes, it's worth having a licensed plumber take a look to rule out anything more serious.

Our recommendation: Address it within a few weeks rather than months. If you'd like a professional to assess whether it's a simple fix or something more, Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers free estimates and can usually diagnose the issue quickly.

Q2

How do I stop a pipe from leaking temporarily?

A leaking pipe needs immediate attention to prevent water damage, but there are several temporary fixes that can buy you time until a licensed plumber arrives.

Shut Off the Water First

Before anything else, turn off the water supply to the affected area. Most fixtures have a shut-off valve directly underneath or behind them. If you can't isolate the leak, turn off your **main water shut-off valve** — in Ottawa homes, this is typically in the basement near the front foundation wall.

Temporary Repair Options

For a small pinhole leak or crack, a **pipe repair clamp** (available at hardware stores like Home Depot or Rona) is your best option. It's a rubber-lined metal clamp that wraps around the pipe and can hold for days or weeks. **Pipe repair tape** (self-fusing silicone tape) is another solid option — wrap it tightly around a dry pipe in overlapping layers. For a very minor drip, **plumber's epoxy putty** can be pressed around the leak on a dry surface and hardens within minutes.

These are genuinely useful temporary measures, but they are not permanent repairs. The underlying cause — whether it's corrosion, a failed joint, or a freeze crack — will need to be properly diagnosed and fixed.

What to Watch For

If the leak is at a **joint or fitting**, or if you see water staining, soft drywall, or mold nearby, the damage may be more extensive than it appears. A slow leak hidden inside a wall can cause thousands of dollars in structural damage over time. Ottawa's cold winters also mean freeze-related cracks often affect a longer section of pipe than the visible leak suggests.

Your Next Step

Apply your temporary fix, keep an eye on it, and get a plumber in as soon as possible — ideally within 24-48 hours. If the leak is worsening, near electrical panels, or you can't stop the flow, call immediately. Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers 24/7 emergency service, and a typical leak repair runs **\$200 - \$500** depending on the pipe location and extent of damage.

Q3

What should I do if my basement is flooding?

Shut off your main water supply immediately and get everyone out of the flooded area. This is a plumbing emergency that requires immediate action to prevent extensive water damage and potential electrical hazards.

First, ensure safety by turning off electricity to the basement at your main panel if you can do so safely from a dry area. Never enter standing water if electrical outlets, appliances, or the electrical panel could be submerged. If the water is more than a few inches deep or rising quickly, evacuate the basement immediately.

Locate and shut off your main water valve - it's typically near where the water line enters your home, often by the water meter or in a utility room. Turn it clockwise to close. If you can't find it or it won't turn, call Ottawa Pro Plumbing immediately as we provide 24/7 emergency service for situations exactly like this.

Identify the source if possible - is water coming from a burst pipe, backed up floor drain, sewer line, or external flooding? For burst pipes, the main shutoff will help. For sewer backups, avoid using any water in the house as this will worsen the backup. Document everything with photos for insurance purposes, but only if you can do so safely.

In Ottawa's climate, basement flooding often occurs during spring thaw or heavy rainfall when municipal systems are overwhelmed. If this appears to be sewer backup (dark, smelly water), this is a health hazard requiring professional cleanup. Many Ottawa homes benefit from backwater valve installation to prevent future sewer backups - the City of Ottawa even offers rebates for this upgrade.

Call a licensed plumber immediately - basement flooding can cause structural damage, mold growth, and contamination. We provide emergency flood response throughout Ottawa and can help identify the cause, make repairs, and recommend prevention measures. Time is critical in flood situations to minimize damage and health risks.

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Who do I call for an emergency plumber in Ottawa?

For emergency plumbing in Ottawa, call Ottawa Pro Plumbing at our 24/7 emergency line. We provide immediate response for burst pipes, sewer backups, no water situations, and flooding emergencies throughout Ottawa and the surrounding area.

Emergency plumbing situations require immediate professional attention to prevent extensive water damage and health hazards. Common emergencies include burst pipes during Ottawa's harsh winters, main sewer line backups, complete loss of water supply, gas line leaks, and flooding from failed water heaters or appliances. These situations can cause thousands of dollars in damage within hours if not addressed quickly.

Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers true 24/7 emergency service with licensed, WSIB-insured plumbers who can respond quickly to your location. Our emergency service covers Ottawa and the surrounding 50km radius, and we carry the proper equipment and parts to handle most emergency repairs on the spot. Emergency service calls typically start at \$150-\$250 plus the cost of repairs, but this investment prevents much more expensive water damage restoration costs.

Before the plumber arrives, take these immediate steps: For burst pipes, shut off your main water valve (usually located where the water line enters your home). For sewer backups, stop using all water and plumbing fixtures immediately. For gas smells, evacuate the building and call the gas company first. Take photos of any water damage for insurance purposes, and move valuables away from affected areas.

Keep our emergency number handy and know the location of your main water shutoff valve before an emergency strikes. For immediate emergency plumbing service in Ottawa, contact Ottawa Pro Plumbing - we're here when you need us most.

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What do I do if my sewer backs up?

Immediately stop using all water in your home and call a licensed plumber for emergency service. Sewer backups are serious health hazards that require professional attention right away.

First, take these immediate safety steps: Turn off electricity to any flooded areas to prevent electrocution risk. Don't walk through sewage water, and keep children and pets away from the contaminated area. If sewage is coming up through floor drains or toilets, avoid using any plumbing fixtures - this includes toilets, sinks, washing machines, and dishwashers, as using water will worsen the backup.

Sewer backups in Ottawa homes typically happen during heavy rainfall when the city's storm and sanitary systems become overwhelmed, or due to blockages in your main sewer line from tree roots, grease buildup, or collapsed pipes. The City of Ottawa requires backwater valves on new construction and strongly recommends them for existing homes to prevent these backups. Without proper protection, sewage can flood basements causing thousands in damage and serious health risks from bacteria and viruses.

Professional assessment is critical because sewer backups can indicate problems with your main sewer line, the city's system, or inadequate backflow prevention. A licensed plumber will use camera inspection to identify the source - whether it's a blockage in your line, a city system issue, or lack of proper backwater valve protection. They can also coordinate with the City of Ottawa if the backup originated from municipal infrastructure.

For immediate help with your sewer backup emergency, Ottawa Pro Plumbing provides 24/7 emergency service throughout Ottawa. We'll assess the situation, clear blockages, and recommend permanent solutions like backwater valve installation to prevent future incidents.

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Should I call a plumber for a small leak?

Yes, you should call a plumber for even a small leak. What seems minor can quickly become major water damage, and small leaks often indicate larger problems developing behind walls or under floors.

Small leaks are rarely just small problems. That drip under your kitchen sink or the wet spot on your ceiling represents water going where it shouldn't - and water always finds the path of least resistance. A small leak today can become a burst pipe, rotted floor joists, or mold growth tomorrow. In Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles, even tiny leaks can expand and cause significant damage when temperatures drop.

The hidden costs of waiting far exceed the service call. Water damage restoration in Ottawa typically costs \$2,000-\$10,000 or more, while a leak repair usually runs \$200-\$500. Insurance companies are also increasingly strict about covering damage from "slow leaks" that homeowners knew about but didn't address promptly. Many policies require immediate action once you discover water damage.

Professional diagnosis reveals the real issue. What looks like a simple drip might be a failing supply line, loose fitting, or corroded pipe that's ready to fail completely. Licensed plumbers can identify whether it's a quick fix or a sign that other components need attention. They'll also check for proper water pressure and ensure repairs meet Ontario Building Code requirements.

For immediate damage control, place a bucket under the leak and turn off the water supply to that fixture if possible. Take photos for insurance purposes and monitor the leak's progression. However, don't wait more than a day or two to get professional assessment - water damage accelerates quickly in Ottawa's humid summers and freeze-prone winters.

Want peace of mind about your plumbing? Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers free consultations to assess leaks and explain your options before any work begins.

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How do I shut off the water to my house?

Your main water shut-off valve is typically located where the water line enters your house from the street, usually in the basement near the front wall or in a utility room. Turn the valve clockwise (righty-tighty) until it stops - this cuts off all water to your home.

Finding your main shut-off valve is crucial for every homeowner. In Ottawa homes, it's most commonly found in the basement along the foundation wall facing the street, often near your water meter. The valve may be a wheel-style gate valve or a lever-style ball valve. If you have a ball valve, turn the handle 90 degrees so it's perpendicular to the pipe. Some newer Ottawa homes have the shut-off located in a utility room or mechanical room on the main floor.

In emergency situations like burst pipes or major leaks, knowing this location can save you thousands in water damage. After shutting off the main valve, open a few faucets throughout the house to drain remaining water from the pipes. This prevents additional water from flowing out of any damaged pipes and reduces pressure in the system.

If you can't locate your shut-off valve or it's not working properly, there's also a curb stop valve at the street (usually requires a water meter key to operate). However, this is typically the city's responsibility and should only be used in true emergencies. Some Ottawa homes also have individual shut-offs for fixtures like toilets and sinks under the fixture itself.

Test your main shut-off valve annually by turning it off and back on to ensure it works when you need it. If the valve is stuck, leaking, or doesn't fully stop the water flow, have it replaced by a licensed plumber - a faulty shut-off valve is a major risk for water damage.

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