

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING

Emergency Plumbing

Burst pipes, major leaks, sewer backups, and
urgent plumbing issues

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawaplumbingpro.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Who pays for emergency plumbing in a rental?

In Ontario, who pays for emergency plumbing in a rental depends on the cause of the problem — not just whether you're a tenant or landlord.

The landlord is almost always responsible for maintaining the plumbing system under Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act. This means if a pipe bursts, a sewer backs up, or the water heater fails through normal wear and tear, the landlord must pay for repairs and arrange them promptly. "Promptly" matters — loss of water or sewage function is considered an urgent repair in Ontario.

Tenants are responsible when the damage is caused by their own actions. If a drain is clogged because a tenant flushed wipes or poured grease down the drain, or if a toilet is cracked because of misuse, the landlord can reasonably charge the tenant for that repair. The key question is always: *was this caused by the tenant's negligence, or was it a normal system failure?*

Ottawa-specific context: Ottawa landlords are bound by both the Residential Tenancies Act and Ottawa's Property Standards Bylaw, which requires rental units to maintain functional plumbing at all times. Tenants can file a complaint with Ottawa By-law Services or the Landlord and Tenant Board if a landlord refuses to address an urgent plumbing issue.

From a practical standpoint, if you're a tenant facing an emergency like a burst pipe or sewer backup, your first step is to **shut off the water if possible** and notify your landlord in writing immediately (text or email creates a paper trail). If the landlord is unreachable and there's active flooding or sewage backup, you can call a plumber yourself — document everything and keep receipts, as you may be able to recover costs.

If you're a landlord dealing with a rental property emergency in Ottawa, Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers **24/7 emergency service** and can be on-site quickly to minimize water damage. Feel free to request a quote or consultation.

Q2

Is a clogged drain an emergency or can it wait?

Most clogged drains are not emergencies and can wait until regular business hours, but the severity and location determine urgency. A slow-draining kitchen sink is an inconvenience, while a completely backed-up main sewer line affecting multiple fixtures requires immediate attention.

Single fixture clogs like a bathroom sink, shower, or one toilet can typically wait for normal service hours. These are usually localized blockages that won't cause property damage if you simply avoid using that fixture. You can try basic troubleshooting like plunging a toilet or using a drain snake on a sink, but avoid chemical drain cleaners which can damage pipes and make professional clearing more difficult.

Emergency situations include sewer backups where wastewater comes up through floor drains or multiple fixtures, complete blockages of your only toilet, or any situation where water is overflowing and could damage your home. In Ottawa's older neighborhoods with combined sewer systems, heavy rainfall can sometimes cause backups that need immediate attention to prevent basement flooding.

Ottawa-specific considerations include our freeze-thaw cycles that can worsen existing blockages, and the fact that many homes have older clay sewer lines susceptible to root intrusion. If you're experiencing recurring clogs or slow drains throughout your home, this often indicates a main line issue that should be addressed promptly with camera inspection to prevent a complete backup.

Prevention is key - avoid putting grease, coffee grounds, or non-flushable items down drains. For urgent drain issues or if you're unsure about severity, Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers 24/7 emergency service to assess the situation and prevent water damage to your home.

Q3

How fast can an emergency plumber get to me?

Emergency plumbers in Ottawa typically arrive within 1-2 hours for true emergencies, though response times can vary based on location, time of day, and current demand. Most reputable plumbing companies prioritize calls involving active flooding, sewer backups, or complete loss of water service.

Response time factors include your specific location within Ottawa's service area, weather conditions, and the severity of your emergency. Companies serving the core urban areas of Ottawa usually have faster response times than those in rural areas within the 50km service radius. During extreme weather events or peak demand periods (like during freezing temperatures when pipes commonly burst), response times may extend to 2-4 hours.

What qualifies as a true emergency makes a difference in scheduling priority. Active water leaks causing flooding, complete sewer backups, burst pipes, or total loss of water service get immediate response. Issues like a single clogged drain or a dripping faucet, while inconvenient, typically get scheduled for regular service hours unless they're causing property damage.

While waiting for the plumber, take immediate action to minimize damage. For burst pipes, shut off your main water valve (usually located near where the water line enters your home). For sewer backups, stop using all water and plumbing fixtures immediately. Document any damage with photos for insurance purposes.

Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers 24/7 emergency service throughout Ottawa and the surrounding area. When you call with an emergency, we'll give you an estimated arrival time and walk you through immediate steps to protect your property until we arrive.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Pro Plumbing. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of July 5, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawaplumbingpro.ca for the latest answers.