

# From Pa

# Pipe bursts at Ipswich High School - again

*Salem News*  
1/22/03

By STEVE LANDWEHR  
Staff writer

## Pipe: Ipswich High School wing flooded

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Parker called Middle School Principal Cheryl Forster, who suggested grabbing all the clothing from the lost and found and stuffing it under doors to hold back the water.

The temporary dams held until the sprinkler system was shut down about 45 minutes after the break. Despite the damage, things could have been worse, Forster said.

"We weren't sure we would be able to open the school today (Tuesday)," Forster said. The schools were empty Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

This is the second time a burst pipe has flooded this wing since the \$32 million complex opened in 2000. Last February, a leak caused by a frozen pipe sent water into three music rooms and the theater stage, filling the orchestra pit.

Yesterday, the entrances to the Performing Arts Center were cordoned off, and a sheet of ice on the sidewalks was frozen evidence of the flood.

A split sprinkler pipe fitting in an unheated section of ceiling in the entrance is being blamed for

the leak. The entrance is a wall of glass doors and sidelights, and as temperatures dipped near zero Monday morning, the water in the sprinkler pipes in the entrance froze, causing the fitting to split.

Water shot out of the pipe onto the underside of the roof, with enough force to blast the fireproof coating from it. The geyser then sprayed onto the ceiling in the lobby, sections of which collapsed.

When Forster arrived at about 6:30 a.m., "It was looking very disruptive," she said. Not only was there water everywhere, "It was all black from the pipes," Forster said.

Although the principal initially considered having school custodians clean up the mess, it soon became evident professional help was needed and cleaners were called in. They arrived at about 1 p.m. and worked until about 9.

"They did a great job," said Forster, who also commended firefighters for their quick response to the scene early Monday as well.

No damage or cost estimates were available yesterday, school officials said, although insurance is expected to cover repair costs.

Fans and dehumidifiers were running throughout the performing arts areas at the school, and Forster said it didn't look like there would be any long-term problems.

"They feel they got on it fast enough there won't be a mold problem," she said.

Local contractor Dennis Howes has been hired to repair the damage, and Forster said the ventilation in the ceiling will be improved to prevent another frozen pipe.

An unrelated problem with the security system at the school also caused problems Friday. Forster said a faulty sensor twice set off the fire alarm.

"Thankfully, it was just after dismissal, or I would have had to send the kids out into the freezing weather twice," she said.

Forster was philosophical yesterday about the unexpected surprises in a new school.

"The building is going to be teaching us about itself for the next three years," she said.

Because of the damage in the lobby, Thursday's School Committee meeting has been moved to the media center at the middle/high school, at 7:30 p.m.

IPSWICH — Workers are still cleaning up and repairing water damage after a frozen pipe in the entrance to the Performing Arts Center at the middle/high school burst early Monday morning.

The rupture sent sheets of water cascading out the doors and brought down sections of ceiling in the lobby between the theater and the Ensemble Room.

When custodian Buddy Parker arrived, after being alerted to a problem at the facility by the school's security company on Monday, water was pouring from under the doors in the entrance to the Performing Arts Center.

Worse, it was cascading down into the band and chorus rooms and flowing down the hallway, threatening to flood classrooms.

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Staff photo/Paul Bilodeau

Ipswich High School nighttime supervisor Rinaldo Rovedo holds the sprinkler fitting that broke after the water inside of it froze.

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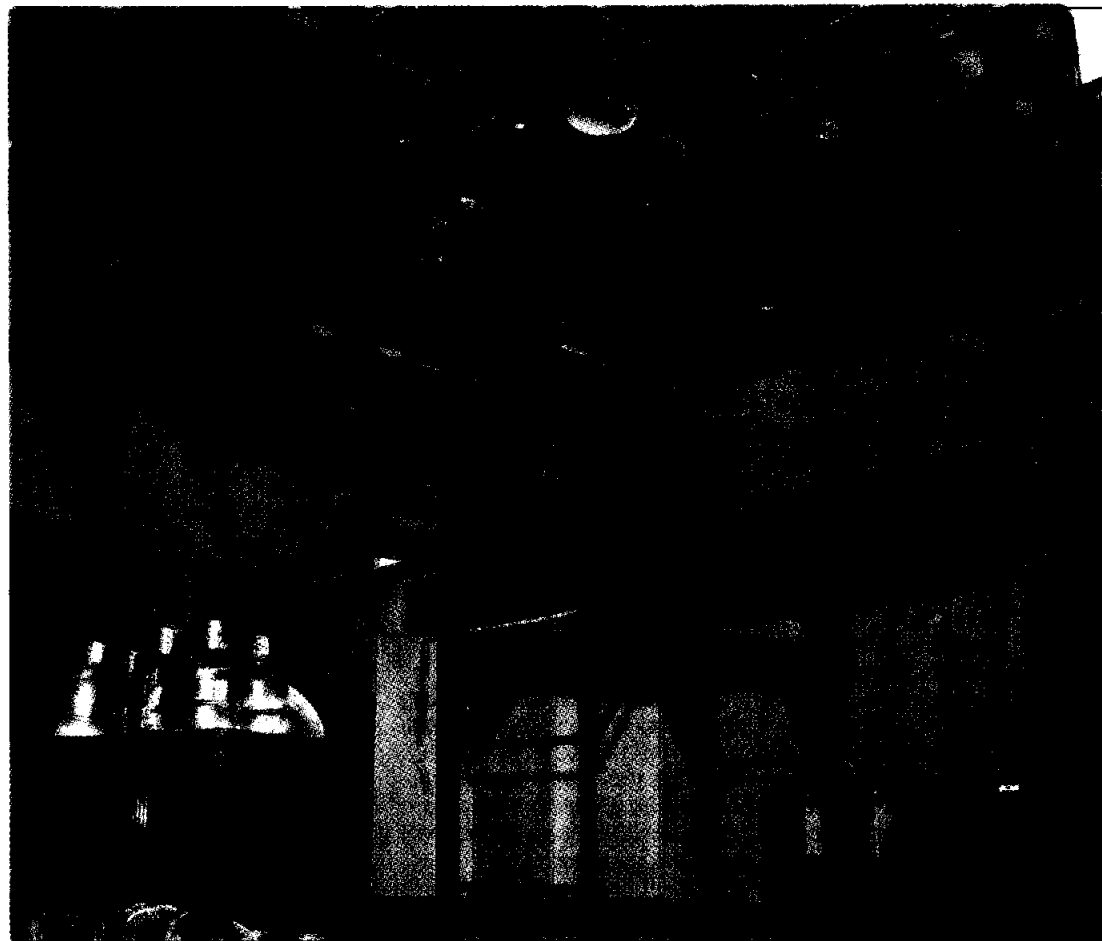
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Staff photo/Paul Bilodeau

Carpenter Dennis Howes works on repairing a ceiling at the Ipswich High School, which was damaged by a water break.