

# 18

## Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

This tutorial illustrates change in coupling of groundwater flow and thermal flow as a result of ground freezing. A tunnel is constructed with the use of freeze pipes. By first installing freeze pipes in the soil, the soil freezes and becomes watertight so that tunnel construction can take place. This method of construction requires a lot of energy for the cooling of the soil, so by being able to model the cooling behaviour while groundwater flow is present an optimal freezing system can be designed.

### Objectives

- Modelling soil freezing, coupling between thermal flow and groundwater flow
- Modelling unfrozen water content.
- Using the command line for structure definition.

### Geometry

In this tutorial a tunnel with a radius of 3.0 m will be constructed in a 30 m deep soil layer. A groundwater flow from left to right is present, influencing the thermal behaviour of the soil. First the soil will be subjected to the low temperatures of the freeze pipes, and once the soil has frozen sufficiently, tunnel construction can take place. The latter is not included in this tutorial.

Because groundwater flow causes an asymmetric temperature distribution, the whole geometry needs to be modelled, where in previous examples only half of the geometry was sufficient.

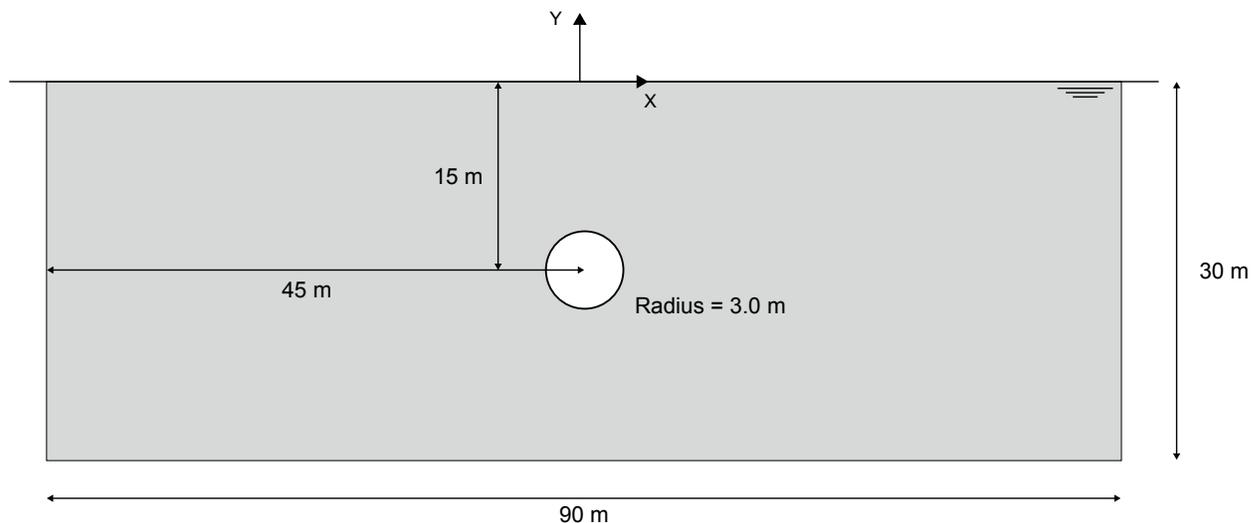


Figure 221: Geometry of the project

# Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

Create new project

---

## 18.1 Create new project

1. Start the Input program and select **Start a new project** from the **Quick start** dialog box.
2. In the **Project** tabsheet of the **Project properties** window, enter an appropriate title.
3. In the **Model** tabsheet, the default options for **Model** and **Elements** are used for this project. Also the default options for the units are used in this tutorial. Note that the unit of **Mass** is set automatically to **tonnes**.
4. Set the model **Contour** to  $x_{\min} = -45$  m,  $x_{\max} = 45$  m,  $y_{\min} = -30$  m and  $y_{\max} = 0$  m.
5. In the **Constants** tabsheet, set  $T_{\text{water}}$  and  $T_{\text{ref}}$  to 283 K, other constants keep their default values. A description of constants can be found in the Reference Manual.
6. Click **OK** to close the **Project properties** window.

## 18.2 Define the soil stratigraphy

To define the soil stratigraphy:

1. Click the **Create borehole** button  and create a borehole at  $x = 0$ . The **Modify soil layers** window pops up.
2. Create a single soil layer with top level at 0 m and bottom level at -30 m. Set the head at ground level (0 m).

## 18.3 Create and assign material data sets

1. Click the **Materials** button  in the **Modify soil layers** window.
2. Define a data set for soil with the parameters given in [Table 40](#) (on page 249), for the **General Parameters** and **Groundwater** tabsheets.

# Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

Create and assign material data sets

**Table 40: Material properties**

| Parameter                             | Name             | Sand                           | Unit              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>General</b>                        |                  |                                |                   |
| Material model                        | -                | Mohr-Coulomb                   | -                 |
| Type of material behaviour            | -                | Drained                        | -                 |
| Soil unit weight above phreatic level | $\gamma_{unsat}$ | 18                             | kN/m <sup>3</sup> |
| Soil unit weight below phreatic level | $\gamma_{sat}$   | 18                             | kN/m <sup>3</sup> |
| Initial void ratio                    | $e_{init}$       | 0.5                            | -                 |
| <b>Parameters</b>                     |                  |                                |                   |
| Young's modulus                       | $E'$             | 100 · 10 <sup>3</sup>          | kN/m <sup>2</sup> |
| Poisson's ratio                       | $\nu$            | 0.3                            | -                 |
| Cohesion                              | $c_{ref}'$       | 0                              | kN/m <sup>2</sup> |
| Friction angle                        | $\varphi'$       | 37                             | °                 |
| Dilatancy angle                       | $\psi$           | 0                              | °                 |
| <b>Groundwater</b>                    |                  |                                |                   |
| Soil - Data set                       | -                | Standard                       | -                 |
| Soil - Type                           | -                | Medium                         | -                 |
| Flow parameters - Use defaults        | -                | None                           | -                 |
| Horizontal permeability               | $k_x$            | 1                              | m/day             |
| Vertical permeability                 | $k_y$            | 1                              | m/day             |
| <b>Thermal</b>                        |                  |                                |                   |
| Specific heat capacity                | $c_s$            | 860                            | kJ/t/K            |
| Thermal conductivity                  | $\lambda_s$      | 4 · 10 <sup>-3</sup>           | kW/m/K            |
| Soil density                          | $\rho_s$         | 2.6                            | t/m <sup>3</sup>  |
| Solid thermal expansion               | -                | Volumetric                     | -                 |
| Thermal expansion                     | $\alpha_s$       | 0.015 · 10 <sup>-3</sup>       | 1/K               |
| Unfrozen water content                | -                | User defined (see table below) | -                 |

## Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

Create and assign material data sets

| Parameter                    | Name | Sand      | Unit                |
|------------------------------|------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>Interfaces</b>            |      |           |                     |
| Interface strength           | -    | Rigid     | -                   |
| Thermal resistance           | R    | 0         | m <sup>2</sup> K/kW |
| <b>Initial</b>               |      |           |                     |
| K <sub>0</sub> determination | -    | Automatic | -                   |

To model the amount of (fluid) water available to flow through the soil at certain temperatures, a curve for unfrozen water content needs to be determined by defining a table with values for unfrozen water content at certain temperatures. The same curve can be applied in other projects, hence the table can be saved and loaded into the soil properties of other projects. For more information, refer to the Reference Manual.

- Click the **Thermal** tab. Enter the values as given in the table below.

**Table 41: Input for unfrozen water content curve for sand**

| #  | Temperature [K] | Unfrozen water content [-] |
|----|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1  | 273.0           | 1.00                       |
| 2  | 272.0           | 0.99                       |
| 3  | 271.6           | 0.96                       |
| 4  | 271.4           | 0.90                       |
| 5  | 271.3           | 0.81                       |
| 6  | 271.0           | 0.38                       |
| 7  | 270.8           | 0.15                       |
| 8  | 270.6           | 0.06                       |
| 9  | 270.2           | 0.02                       |
| 10 | 269.5           | 0.00                       |

- Select the option **User defined** from the drop down menu for **Unfrozen water content** at the bottom of the tabsheet.
- Add rows to the table by clicking the **Add row** button . Complete the data using the values given in [Table 41](#) (on page 250).
- Enter the values for **Interfaces** and **Initial** tabsheets as given in [Table 40](#) (on page 249).
- Click **OK** to close the dataset.
- Assign the material dataset to the soil layer.

## Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

Define the structural elements

### Note:

The table can be saved by clicking the **Save** button in the table. The file must be given an appropriate name. For convenience, save the file in the same folder as the project is saved.

## 18.4 Define the structural elements

The freeze pipes are modelled by defining lines with a length similar to the freeze pipe diameter (10 cm), containing a convective boundary condition. For simplicity, in this tutorial only 12 cooling elements are defined, while in reality more elements may be implemented in order to achieve a sufficient share of frozen soil.

1. Proceed to **Structures** mode.
2. Click the **Create line** button  in the side toolbar.
3. Click the command line and type

```
line 0 -12.05 0 -11.95
```

Press **Enter** to create the first freezing pipe. For more information regarding command line, see Reference Manual.

4. The remaining freeze pipes will be created by copying the first freeze pipe 12 times. To do so select the line representing the freeze pipe that was just created.
5. From the side toolbar select the **Create array** option . Set the **Array pattern** to **Polar** as we want to create a circle of freeze pipes, the **Center point** is  $(x, y) = (0, -15)$ , the **Total number of items** is 12 (the original plus 11 copies) and finally the **Angle to fill** must be set to 360 degrees as we want to create a full circle. Press OK to create the 11 additional freeze pipes.
6. Multi select the 12 lines representing the freeze pipes using the **Select lines** option  from the side toolbar.
7. Right click the selected lines and select **Thermal flow BC**  to create the thermal flow boundary conditions for the freeze pipes.
8. For the selected freeze pipes, in the **Selection explorer** expand the subtree for the **ThermalFlowBC**.
9. The **Behaviour** is set to **Convection**, the  $T_{\text{fluid}}$  to 250 K and the **Transfer coefficient** to 1.0 kW/m<sup>2</sup>/K.
10. Click the **Create line** button  in the side toolbar.
11. Select the **Create thermal flow BC** option  in the expanded menu. In the drawing area create a thermal boundary condition along the perimeter of the model, hence from  $(x, y) = (-45, 0)$  to  $(45, 0)$ ,  $(45, -30)$ ,  $(-45, -30)$  and back to  $(-45, 0)$ .
12. Select the four boundaries just have been created and right-click on them. From the menu that pops up select **Create** and **Create groundwater flow BC** to add groundwater flow boundary conditions to the thermal flow boundary conditions.

PLAXIS 2D allows different types of **Thermal** boundary conditions to be applied. In this tutorial the freeze pipes will be modelled as convective boundary conditions.

1. Multi select the created boundaries.
2. For the **ThermalFlowBC**, set the **Behaviour** to **Temperature** and  $T_{\text{ref}}$  to 283 K.

To assign the groundwater boundary conditions, the following steps are followed:

## Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

### Generate the mesh

---

1. Multi select the top and bottom boundary.
2. For the **GWFlowBC**, set the **Behaviour** to **Closed**.
3. Select the left boundary, set the **Behaviour** to **Inflow** with a  $q_{ref}$  value of 0.1 m/day.
4. The right boundary has the default behaviour of **Seepage**.

The tunnel is created with the help of the **Tunnel designer**. Because deformations are not considered in this calculation, there is no need to assign a plate material to the tunnel. The generated tunnel will only be used for generating a more dense and homogeneous mesh around the freezing pipes. The tunnel will not be activated during any calculation phase, but PLAXIS 2D will detect the line elements and will generate the mesh according to these elements. Changing the coarseness factor of the pipe elements will cause a denser, but not a more homogeneous mesh.

1. Click the **Create tunnel** button in the side toolbar and click on (42.5 -18) in the drawing area.
2. The option **Circular** is selected for **Shape type**. Note that the default option is **Free**.
3. The default option of **Define whole tunnel** is used in this example.
4. Proceed to the **Segments** tab and set **Radius** to 3 m to the two multi selected segments.
5. Click on **Generate** to generate the defined tunnel in the model. Close the **Tunnel designer** window.

The geometry of the model is shown in the figure below.

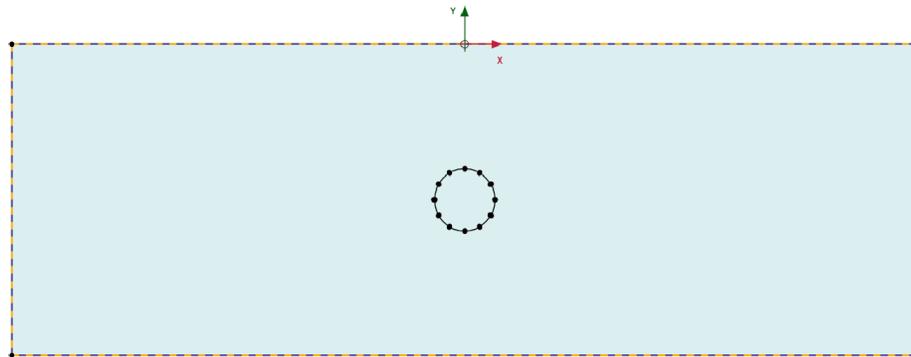


Figure 222: Geometry of the model

## 18.5 Generate the mesh

1. Proceed to the **Mesh** mode.
2. Click the **Generate mesh** button  to generate the mesh. The default element distribution of **Medium** is used for this example.
3. Click the **View mesh** button  to view the mesh.  
The resulting mesh is shown:

## Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

Define and perform the calculation

---

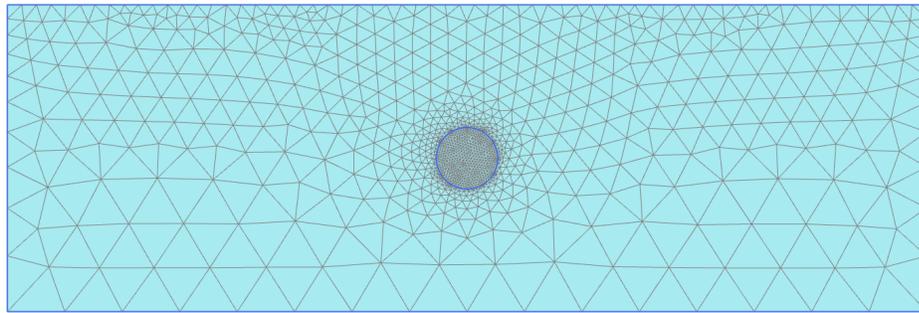


Figure 223: The generated mesh

4. Click the **Close** tab to close the Output program.

## 18.6 Define and perform the calculation

The calculations for this tutorial are carried out in the **Flow only** mode.

### 18.6.1 Initial phase

1. Click on the **Staged construction** tab to proceed with the definition of the calculation phases.
2. Double click on **Initial phase** in the **Phases explorer**.
3. In the **Phases** window select the **Flow only** option from the **Calculation type** drop-down menu.
4. Choose the **Earth gradient** option for the **Thermal calculation type**.
5. In the **Staged construction** activate the **ThermalFlow** under the **Model conditions** subtree and set the value for  $T_{ref}$  to 283 K,  $h_{ref}$  to 0 m and 0 K/m for the **Earth gradient**.

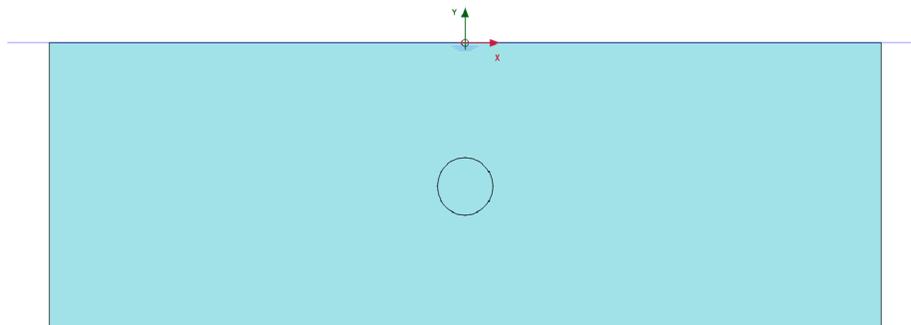


Figure 224: Initial phase

## Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

### Results

---

### 18.6.2 Phase 1: Transient calculation

1. Click the **Add phase** button  to create a new phase.
2. Double click the new phase in the **Phases explorer**.
3. In the **Phases** window, enter an appropriate name for the phase ID (e.g. Transient calculation).
4. Set **Transient groundwater flow**  as the option for the **Pore pressure calculation type**.
5. Set **Transient thermal flow**  as the option for the **Thermal calculation type**.
6. Set **Time interval** to 180 days and the **Max number of steps stored** to 100. This is to be able to view intermediate time steps after the calculation.
7. In **Staged construction** mode, activate all the thermal boundary conditions by clicking the check box for the **Thermal flow BCs** in the **Model explorer**.
8. In the **Model explorer**, activate the four groundwater flow boundary conditions corresponding to the left, top, right and bottom boundary conditions in the **Groundwater flow BCs** subtree.

### 18.6.3 Execute the calculation

Before starting the calculation it is suggested that you select nodes or stress points for a later generation of curves.

1. Click the **Select points for curves** button  in the side toolbar. Select at least the node in the middle of the model and some characteristic points for curves (for example between two freezing pipes).
2. Click the **Calculate** button  to calculate the project.
3. After the calculation has finished, save the project by clicking the **Save** button .

## 18.7 Results

Interesting results from this calculation can be the point in time when there is no groundwater flow in between two freezing pipes, groundwater flow over the whole model and temperature distribution for both steady state and transient calculations.

To view the results in the Output program:

1. Click the **View calculation results** button  on the toolbar.
2. Select the menu **Stresses > Heat flow > Temperature**.
3. The figure below shows the spatial distribution of the temperature for transient calculation in the final step. Note that the element contours have been switched off to better show that the temperature of the soil inside the tunnel is below freezing.

# Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

## Results

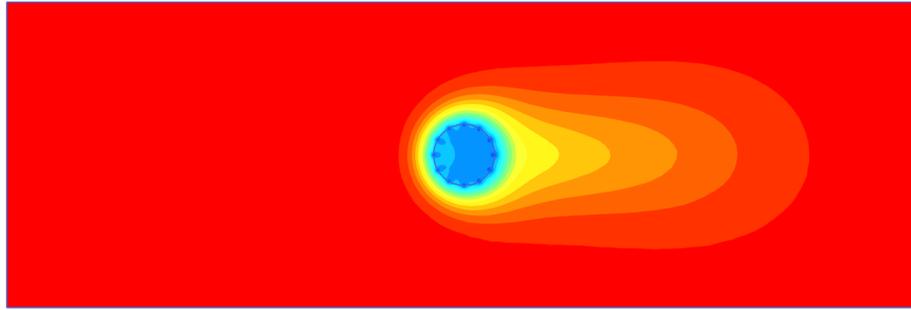


Figure 225: Temperature distribution for transient phase

1. Select the menu **Stresses > Groundwater flow > |q|**.
2. Select the menu **View > Arrows** or click the corresponding button  in the toolbar to display the results arrows.

In the Output program, it is possible to view the results for the intermediate saved steps. More information is available in the Reference Manual. It is possible to view the progression of the freezing of the tunnel.

The figure below shows the distribution of the of groundwater flow field for an intermediate step for the transient calculation (around 38 days).

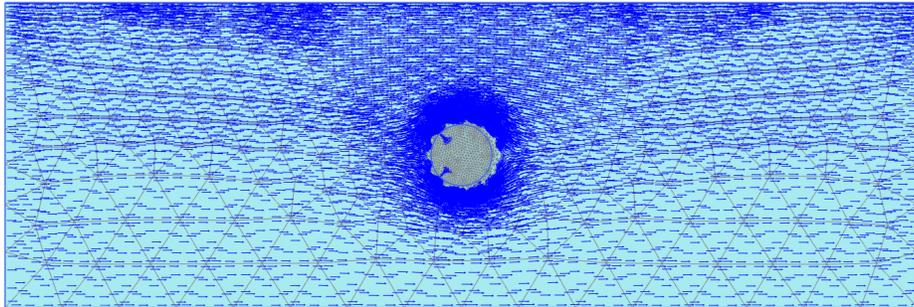


Figure 226: Groundwater flow field for transient phase for an intermediate step ( $t_{approx}$  38 days)

The figure below shows the groundwater flow field for the last time step for the transient flow calculation. Here it is clearly noticeable that the entire tunnel area is frozen and no flow occurs.

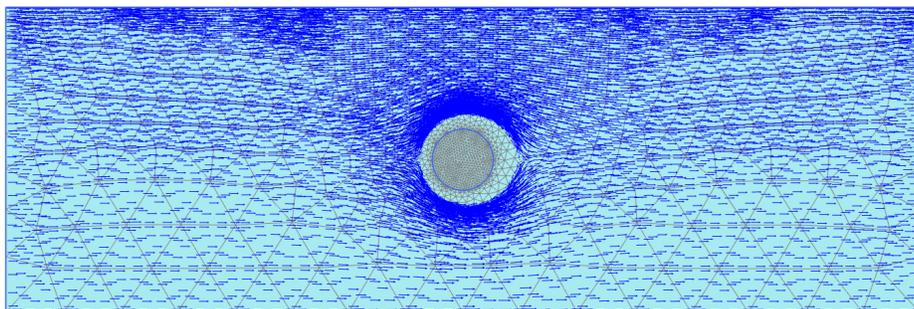


Figure 227: Groundwater flow field after 180 days

The final figure shows the change of temperature in time for the point in the middle of the tunnel. It can be seen that the temperature drops quite fast until about 273 K when the pore water starts to change from water to ice.

# Freeze pipes in tunnel construction [ULT]

## Results

During this process the temperature remains almost constant and only until after all pore water has turned to ice (at  $t = 122$  s) the ice temperature drops further.

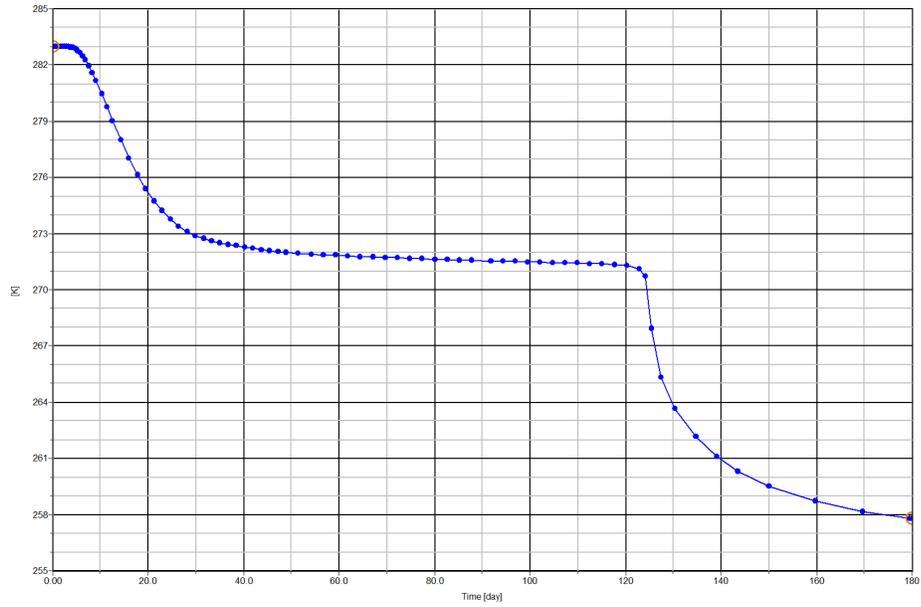


Figure 228: Temperature drop in time at the center of the tunnel