

Winter hints and tips...



Please keep this somewhere safe so you can refer to it over the coming months.

Winter Hints and Tips

Are you prepared for what this winter will bring?

Can you answer the following?

- What are the simple steps to reduce your risk this winter?
- What protective measures should your organisation take?
- What is your duty of care?

To help you, our risk management experts have put together some top tips.



Burst pipes

The cost and inconvenience caused by a burst pipe can be considerable. Just a small fracture can release gallons of water, damaging masonry and wall finishes, carpets and other contents.

The chance of suffering these losses can be reduced by following a few simple steps:

- Make sure the boiler and heating system is serviced regularly and check that the thermostat is working correctly
- Make sure you know where to turn off the water supply
- Check the insulation on your water pipes and cold water tank - those in the attic or other vulnerable spaces should be lagged or similarly protected
- Make sure any external taps are turned off and disconnect any hoses
- Keep your heating on 'low' throughout the winter months.

What if your pipes are frozen?

If you discover a frozen pipe, don't wait for it to burst. Turn off your water supply and then slowly thaw the affected pipe by introducing gentle heat to the area, such as with a hairdryer, heater or hot water bottle. Do not attempt to thaw the pipe with a blow torch or other open flame.

If a pipe does burst, turn off the water supply at the stopcock, open taps in the property to safely release water from the system to drains, and try to catch any excess water in a bucket or other container. Do not use any electrics if you believe these may have been affected by the escaping water. You'll need to have these checked by an electrician.

Devices are available which can detect excessive water flow and alert you. Leak detection systems are also available, which send a text to a designated person enabling them to take appropriate action and mitigate any damage.

What if you are going away or the property will be unoccupied?

- Keep your property heated to reduce the chance of a pipe freezing
- If the premises will be unoccupied for some time, drain down and shut off your water system
- Ask somebody to check on your property daily. This may not prevent a loss but early identification of an escape can help reduce the amount of damage caused.



Advice for the safe use of temporary heaters

Type of heaters

Should your main heating system fail during the winter months, we recommend that electric convector or fan-assisted heaters with thermostatic cut-outs that operate in the event of over-heating are used as a temporary measure.

LPG/Butane/Propane heaters can give off water vapour which may have an adverse effect on the building, and can lead to the onset of rot in woodwork. If they are used, gas cylinders should be kept to a minimum and preferably changed in the open air in a well-ventilated area away from any source of ignition. Gas cylinders present a fire risk so any spare cylinders should not be stored inside the building.

Electric radiant heaters and paraffin/oil fired heaters should never be used, even as a temporary measure. Portable heaters should be sited well clear of combustible materials and protected against the possibility of being knocked over or moved accidentally by the fitting of guards.

Top tips

- Do not leave temporary heaters unattended for long periods
- Turn off any temporary heaters when the building is unoccupied
- They should never be moved when switched on.

Keeping gutters, gullies and drains clear

Check your valleys, gutters, hoppers and downpipes for blockages regularly so that they can carry water away quickly and efficiently. If they are not maintained, blockages will occur and the accumulation of water will eventually cause damage.

Additionally, if a downpipe is blocked, any trapped rainwater may crack or shatter the downpipe if it freezes. Signs of soil being washed away at ground level or splashes of soil at the base of walls can be an indication that water is not being caught by the gully trap.



Keeping an eye on your roof

Loose or missing slates and tiles may mean that water is getting into the roof space. Arranging for a professional to put back a loose or missing slate or tile is much cheaper than repairing or replacing roof timbers.



Keeping the pathways clear

You have a duty of care to ensure that any visitors are safe.

Unfortunately, slips and trips can happen, particularly when there is ice and snow on the ground.

This can include ensuring that entry and exit routes are kept free of anything which may cause a person to slip and taking preventative measures, such as clearing snow and ice and gritting paths.

It is not necessary to ensure that each and every available path is immediately

cleared, as long as there is one safe route available to access the building. Clearly, the timing and extent of any snow fall is relevant. While it might not be reasonable for paths to be cleared during heavy falls of snow, the longer the snow and ice remain on the ground after the fall has ceased, the greater the likelihood of it being considered reasonable for some attempt to be made to clear it.



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PD2566/3/1117