

## Winter Advice

### Tips to prevent Frost & Condensation damage

There are some simple steps you can take to help **prevent your pipes from freezing**:

- Leave the central heating on for short periods of time throughout the day.
- Let warm air into your roof space by keeping the trap door open.
- Keep the cupboard door under the sink open. This will let warm air move around the pipes.
- Keep room doors slightly open to allow the warm air to move around the house.
- If you are going to be away from your house while the weather is cold, ask a friend or neighbour to check the house and keep the heating on.
- Most frozen pipes are found in the roof space and below sink units.

**Condensation** (often mistaken for rising or penetrating damp), can often be mitigated by simple measures:

- In single glazed windows, clean around frames and weep holes to allow excess water to escape.
- Open vents from time to time to allow air circulation.
- Do not dry clothes on radiators.
- Property vent tumble dryers or ventilate rooms containing washing machines.
- If you don't have extractor fans, open bathroom and kitchen windows when in use and leave them open for a short time once you have finished bathing or cooking to let the moisture escape.
- Do not pile clothes or objects against exterior walls.
- Open curtains and blinds during day to allow air to circulate around window frames.
- Allow space around furniture and bedding to allow air to circulate around walls, especially exterior walls. Where possible, position furniture against warmer internal walls.
- Do not use portable LPG heaters.
- Don't block airbricks or vents in the wall.
- Report any water leaks or actual dampness either from pipes, roofs or walls immediately.
- Generally, draught-proofing your home is not a good idea if it is prone to condensation – it stops air circulation, increases condensation and it is not healthy for you and your family.

### What is Condensation?

There is always moisture in the air, but basic household chores (such as cooking, taking baths, showers and drying clothes indoors) can produce up to 20 pints of water vapour each day within your home. It is important

to remove this water vapour before it forms condensation. Poor ventilation and inadequate heating can increase the amount of condensation.

Examples of amounts of moisture produced in a 24-hour period include:

- Washing clothes – 1 to 2 pints
- Drying clothes – 6 to 12 pints
- Cooking – 3 to 7 pints
- Bathing and showering – 1 to 2 pints
- Washing dishes – 1 to 2 pints

Two people at home all day will also produce three to five pints of moisture, while two people asleep for a night will produce another one to two pints.

### What is Damp?

Damp can be caused by:

- leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- water spillages in the bathroom
- leaks around the bath
- not using a shower curtain or screen correctly
- rain seeping through the roof where a tile is missing or cracked
- rain spilling from a blocked gutter or entering around windows
- ineffective damp proof course or in older houses there may not be any damp proofing
- pooling of water against the house walls

Damp usually leaves a tidemark. If this has happened in your home please call us. If you do not think the dampness in your home is caused by any of these and there is no tidemark, it is probably condensation.

### Know the location of your Stopcock (also known as a Stop Valve, or Stop Tap)

- Find your internal Stopcock. It is usually, but not always, located under your kitchen sink and normally closes by turning clockwise. You may want to test it is working.
- NI Water has produced a bright tag for customers to loop around the Stopcock in their premises. This will ensure they are aware of the location of their Stopcock and it will be easily identifiable in the event of a burst pipe. These tags are available for free from our office or by phoning NI Water on 08457 440088.
- Stopcocks are usually found in your kitchen, below the sink unit. However, in some houses the Stopcock is found in a front or back hall or in a larder unit beside the sink unit.
- It is important that you know where the Stopcock is and that you check that it is working.

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- If you cannot find the Stopcock call us and we will try to help you find it or find out where it is.

water may not flush down the plug hole if the pipes below are frozen.

### Avoiding Frozen Pipes

- Make sure doors and windows from unheated parts of your property are kept closed and minimise any draughts from outside.
- If you have tanks or pipes in the roof space, allow some warm air to circulate by opening the trap door.
- Leave the heating on low when you are away.
- Leave a key with a neighbour, friend or family member who can check the house regularly.
- If a property is not in use or occupied for a prolonged period of time it is advisable to turn the water supply off at the Stopcock and even consider draining down the system to lessen the possibility of burst pipes going undetected causing property damage and the waste of water.

### How to drain your cold water tank in event of leak

- Make sure the mains water is turned off at the Stopcock.
- Turn on all the cold-water taps and flush the toilet several times. This will empty the cold-water storage tank and stop the flow of water.
- If you have an open fire burning you should let it burn out and do not light it again until the burst pipe has been fixed.
- Turn off oil or gas heating systems and do not use again until they have been checked.
- Do not use the water heater as this may cause the hot cylinder to collapse.
- Do not turn on the water supply at the Stopcock until the burst pipe has been repaired.
- If the water has come into contact with electrical fittings the electricity should be turned off at the mains.
- If you are going to be away from your home for more than a day or two during cold weather, you should drain down the cold water system as described above.

### Dealing with Frozen Pipes

- Turn off the water supply at the Stopcock.
- Thaw along the pipe, starting from the end nearest the tap.
- Don't use a blow lamp or naked flame.
- Put hot water bottles or a thick cloth soaked in hot water over the frozen pipe or use a hair dryer at its lowest setting to thaw pipes. Be careful not to warm them too quickly.
- Don't leave taps dripping or running. The

### If a pipe bursts

- Turn off the Stopcock.
- Try to block escaping water with thick cloth like towels.
- Turn on all taps to reduce flooding.
- Contact the authorised plumber.
- Don't forget to turn off taps once the problem is fixed to avoid further flooding.

### Online Video Tutorials

NI Water has produced a series of informational videos that can be seen online ([niwater.com](http://niwater.com)) which go over some of the advice above.

### More substantial frost prevention measures (check now, BEFORE the freeze comes)

- Check that there is Insulation on water tanks and pipes in unheated areas like lofts, roof spaces, garages and outbuildings.
- Insulation is essential in helping to prevent water in pipes from freezing. It is also important to ensure there are no gaps in the insulation at bends, valves or fittings.
- It should be noted that even with lagging, extreme weather conditions can result in water in pipes freezing. Without lagging however, the potential for this to happen is greatly increased.
- If any action is required, contact our office to arrange for a Maintenance Officer to inspect, and improve existing pipe work lagging.

**A Barton Company accept no liability for any damage caused by following any of the advice above, which is provided for guidance only. Individual circumstances and properties will determine the best course of action in an emergency, and if unsure, it is best to contact our office, the authorised plumber or electrician.**

**Tenants have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate heating and ventilation is maintained in their properties during the winter months, and if problems do occur, you also have a duty of care to mitigate any damage as far as is possible.**

**Only bills and reports from our authorised tradesmen will be accepted for re-imburement by our office. If you use other contractors, you may find yourself fully liable for any cost incurred.**

If you need clarification on any of the points above, please feel free to contact our office.