

Avoid Frozen Water Pipes - Don't crack up wrap up

How to avoid frost damaged pipes

Don't let winter take you by surprise this year! This simple advice may help you avoid the inconvenience and expense that a frost damaged pipe can cause. Burst pipes cause millions of pounds worth of damage each year, and also needlessly waste water.

What to do before the frosty weather occurs

Insulation

Check that all pipework, cisterns and tanks in un-heated areas like lofts, roofs, under floor spaces, and in outbuildings and garages are well insulated. It is essential that there is no gap in the insulation at bends, tees, valves, etc as heat loss due to these conditions could freeze local pockets of water in the pipe system in less than one hour.

NB. Don't insulate underneath your tank as warm air will be unable to rise from the rooms below. This warm air helps to keep the tank warm and less likely to freeze.

Insulation material should conform to BS 5422 and be installed in accordance with BS 5970.

Stoptap

Check where your stoptap is before frosty weather occurs and make sure it can be turned off in the event of a burst.

Dripping taps

Before the weather becomes frosty, repair any leaking taps.

What to do when frosty weather occurs

Heating

During frosty weather, in order to prevent the pipes within your house from freezing, consider increasing the time your heating is on to keep your house temperature above freezing point at all times. This is particularly important if you are away from home for a few days, when water is not being used and replenished with mains water that will be above freezing point.

If you are away from home for any length of time, turn off the water supply and drain the system.

Note: Insulation does not prevent freezing, it merely increases the time before freezing will occur, if the air temperature does not rise above freezing in the meantime.

Draining down

Even the best insulation will not prevent freezing if frosty conditions persist. So, during lengthy periods of frost, outside pipes and pipework and any exposed plumbing should be isolated and drained down, with draining taps left open. Once the weather conditions have improved supplies can then be restored.

How to deal with frozen pipes

Freezing

Remember that although damage to pipes occurs when they freeze, the burst will only become apparent during the thaw. If freezing has occurred you should isolate the affected area by closing the stoptap (always clockwise) on that supply.

Check where your stoptap is before the frosty weather occurs and make sure it can be turned off in the event of a burst.

If it cannot be closed, you should close the external boundary stoptap (as long as it is safe to do so). Open taps to sinks, basins, etc to drain the plumbing system when the thaw takes place. This should reduce any damage in your home caused by water escaping from a burst pipe.

Thawing out

Before you start to thaw out the system move anything that could be damaged by thawed water escaping from burst pipes.

Warning

After freezing has occurred there can be a risk of explosion if heat is applied suddenly. Don't switch on any water heating appliances, boilers, immersion heaters, etc until you are sure that the system has thawed out.

Do not try to thaw out pipes using a naked flame such as a blow lamp! Instead, use a hot water bottle or a hairdryer, but take care, there may be a burst pipe that could spray water as it thaws.

Caution! Water and electricity don't mix.

Be careful of your wiring or electrical appliances as they may have been affected by the burst. If you are in any doubt, turn off your electricity at the mains and call in an electrician. If there is damage to your water pipes you may want to call a plumber.

How to best repair frozen pipes to help prevent them freezing again

Any pipe or fitting that is damaged by frost should be replaced with approved pipes and fittings. Where practical the new pipes and fittings and adjacent undamaged ones should be buried at a depth of not less than 750mm or laid within heated areas of a building. Insulation material conforming to BS 5422 and installed in accordance with BS 5970 should be fitted as a last resort if this is not practical.

You too can help reduce leakage

If you think we have a leak on our pipes, please telephone us on **0800 281 432**, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.