



Habinteg
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

WINTER FREEZE ADVICE



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Every year, during spells of severely cold weather, householders across Northern Ireland are faced with the possibility of damage to their home and belongings, as a result of freezing and burst water pipes. With a few simple precautions, however, the risk of damage can be reduced considerably. The leaflet contains some simple guidelines to help protect against frozen and burst pipes and other problems caused by severe weather conditions. It also contains some emergency numbers in case of difficulties. Keep the leaflet in a safe place, as a source of reference

HANDY HINTS TO PROTECT YOUR HOME IN WINTER

Locate your Stop Cock

- Your stop cock controls the water supply entering your home. Stop cocks are usually found in your kitchen, below the sink unit. However in some houses they are in a front or back hall or in a larder unit. Take time to find out where yours is located, should you need to close it in the event of a burst pipe.
- We recommend that you check the stop cock every few months to ensure that it can be opened and closed easily.
- If you are planning to be away from your home for lengthy periods, during spells of cold weather, please turn off the water supply at the stop cock.* This will minimise any damage to your home, should a burst occur in any of your pipes.

***NB** Many people choose to spend Christmas and New Year, generally corresponding with the coldest period of the year, with family and friends. This often means people are away from their own homes. If you are intending to be away over the winter holiday period, please let the Habinteg know - contact your Housing Officer or, where applicable, Community Assistant - so that you can be contacted, in the event of an emergency.

Heating/Fuel

- Please ensure, throughout any period of adverse weather conditions, that there is enough oil to run the oil fired central heating or credit to run the gas fired central heating at your property. It is vital to maintain a supply of fuel and/or credit to operate the system.
- Ensure that your heating system is left running - even if at a low temperature and for short periods, throughout the day - when you are away from the property. A minimal, regular supply of heat will greatly reduce the risk of frozen pipes.
- If possible, leave the trap door to your roof space slightly open to allow warm air to circulate in the loft.

Thawing Out Frozen Pipes

- Turn off the water supply at the stop cock. Don't leave any taps running or dripping, as the exit of water down the plughole may be restricted if the down pipes or drains are frozen.

- Protect everything around the pipe that appears to be frozen to avoid damage if it bursts.
- Never attempt to thaw out frozen pipes by switching on your immersion heater or central heating boiler.
- Check for leaking joints or bursts in the pipes.
- Gently heat any frozen pipe sections with a hairdryer (at its lowest setting) or a heated cloth/hot water bottles wrapped around the pipe. Do not warm them too quickly or they may burst. NEVER apply a direct flame.
- Thaw along the pipe from the end nearest the tap.

Burst Pipes

- Turn off the water supply at the stop cock immediately.*
- Switch off your immersion heater, central heating boiler and, if there is any chance that water could come into contact with electrical wirings or fittings, your electricity supply
- Open all COLD water taps to drain the system. **DO NOT TURN ON THE HOT TAPS AS YOUR HOT WATER CYLINDER MAY COLLAPSE IF THE PIPES LEADING TO IT ARE FROZEN.**
- Contact Habinteg's Maintenance Department or, if out of hours the Fold Telecare Emergency Number on 0800 7313081.

- Warn your neighbours so they can take steps to minimize damage to their property.
- **IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR HOT WATER SYSTEM IS REFILLED BEFORE YOU RE-LIGHT BOILER OR SWITCH ON THE IMMERSION HEATER.**

***NB** If you live in an a apartment in a communal building, your procedure is as above but you may have a shared water supply. Make sure you can get to the stop cock, this is normally located where the water supply enters the building. Let your neighbours know if you are turning off the water in case it affects their supply.

USEFUL NUMBERS

For **emergency repairs** (eg serious plumbing, electrical faults etc) outside our normal office hours please call

FREEPHONE 0800 7313081. Please note - only **emergency** repairs are dealt with under this service.

Additional emergency numbers

Northern Ireland Electricity

Emergency Service **08457 643 643**

Northern Ireland Water

Emergency Service **08457 440 088**

Gas (Phoenix & Firmus)

Emergency Service **0800 002 001**

For emergencies relating to fire, crime or serious injury - **999**