

Be Prepared...

# Preparing property for winter



## Understanding the risk

Every winter **millions of pounds of damage** are experienced by businesses and households from burst pipes, roof snow collapses and water ingress. However by taking some **basic precautions and planning ahead**, many incidents can be **prevented** or the **effects of damage minimised**.

### Preventing burst pipes

- **Protect pipes and tanks** with good quality lagging to BS6700.
- **Repair dripping taps & faulty ball valves** as they can cause waste pipes to freeze.
- For **unoccupied buildings** or those with a history of freezing incidents, **leave the heating set at a low** level, or drain all equipment that is susceptible to condensation or freezing.
- **Install a frost stat** to central heating and check it is working correctly.
- Arrange for premises to be **inspected at least daily** in periods of very cold weather.
- **Service heating systems** at least annually.
- Ensure **all boilers are safeguarded against freeze** - particularly drain and condensate lines.
- Drain down all idle boilers.

### Preparedness

- Ensure that you know the **layout and routes of all water**, gas and electricity services within the premises and that this information is recorded and available.
- Know the **location of all main and subsidiary stop-taps** and ensure they are fully operational.
- Research the details of **reliable local plumbing contractors** and keep their contact details available.



### Minimising damage

- Isolate **water at stop cock**. Turn on cold taps to drain the system as quickly as possible.
- **Protect or remove** any **vulnerable contents** or equipment that may be damaged.
- **Never use naked flames to thaw ice** plugged pipes and equipment.
- **'Ice dams'** can be created on the edges of roofs, especially tiled roofs by the continual thawing and refreezing of melting snow. Water may **'back up' up the roof getting under the tiles** and leaking into the building. To help prevent this **keep drains open and free of ice in a safe manner**. Engage specialist companies to perform this if necessary.
- **Monitor the amount of snow on roofs** and clear them before accumulations reach unsafe levels.





## For the business...

Here's some other tips to consider when preparing your business for the winter months:

- **Fit security lights** – Fit security lighting that points at your door or your window to brighten dark areas that burglars may take advantage of.

### Sprinkler systems

- For all sprinkler systems **engage sprinkler contractors** to make systems 'winter safe'.
- Especially vulnerable are systems protecting outdoor areas or cold areas (attics etc), valve chambers, and pump rooms.
- Heating should be maintained at all times at or above 4 degrees C. Exposed pipe work should be trace heated and lagged, and this must be routinely inspected and maintained.

## For the home...

Here's some other tips on preparing the home for winter

- **Reduce drafts** - look for small gaps around windows, fireplaces and TV and telephone wires where cold air could be coming through and seal these.
- **Keep your gutters clear** - regularly clear away any leaves located near gutters to prevent them from falling into the drain pipe and blocking them.
- **Check the roof** - have any broken or missing tiles or slates replaced and other damage repaired.

It is especially important to check flat roofs, which generally need re-covering every five to ten years. Keeping the rain out is one of the most important things you can do.

- **Deter burglars** – Make sure you draw your curtains during the evening so that you don't let potential burglars see what you have in your home when the lights are on.
- **Use a light timer** – If you are going to be away for an extended period use a timer to set your lights to come on at certain times each day to make it look like someone is at home.



- **Sweep your chimneys** - If your chimneys are in use, make sure that they get swept every year. This will remove the build-up of dirt and grime from your chimney walls and prevent soot escaping.
- **Save sharing your snaps 'til you get back** - It's best not to advertise your holidays on social media sites, some thieves will see this as an open invitation. Don't put travel plans online, 'check-in' or post photos while you are away.