

Frozen and burst pipes - Top Tips

Taking a few simple measures now can reduce the disruption, distress and expense caused by burst pipes this winter, while keeping your heating bills as manageable as possible.

Why do pipes freeze and burst?

When temperatures fall below freezing for a period of time, the water inside pipes starts to freeze. When water freezes it expands and because the water in pipes is contained within a confined space, it puts pressure on the pipes and joints which can cause them to crack or split.

When the water thaws, and becomes liquid again, it leaks out of the split. Sometimes this is a small water leak, but on other occasions it can be a 'catastrophic' leak causing major damage to a property and the contents within.

Preventing frozen pipes

Reduce home heat loss to keep your home as warm as possible and reduce energy bills. Consider self-adhesive window strips, keyhole and letterbox covers, or foam, brush or flat draught excluders on doors. See more tips at energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/draught-proofing

If you are not using your heating system please contact us, we are here to help.

If you have gas central heating and your boiler fails, please take a note of the error code on your boiler and contact Heatcare on 01343 842 042. If your electrical heating system fails please contact Albyn on: 0300 323 0990

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Most radiators will also have a setting with a snowflake symbol, allowing minimal water damage caused by pipes bursting due to cold weather.

If you turn your thermostat down to the lowest setting this will minimise the risk of frozen pipes if you are away from home.

We would also recommend asking a friend to check on your home if you are away for more than a few days in winter.

It's a myth that leaving your tap dripping when it's icy can stop your pipes from freezing up. In fact, leaky taps can cause your drains to freeze and water to back up to your sink, leading to an overflow. So make sure that your taps are always fully off and if you have any dripping taps call us and we will arrange for a repair to be carried out.

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If temperatures are below freezing for a number of days opening the cupboard doors under your sink allows some warm air to circulate around pipes.

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If you are leaving your home for more than two weeks always let us know so that we can take precautions to avoid frozen or burst pipes.

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To turn off the water supply to your home you need to find your stopcock, it is usually located under your sink but not always. Call us if you need help to locate it.



It is always a good idea to test your stopcock. Turn off the stopcock and let the water run, if the flow starts to reduce then stops it is working. If after 5 minutes the flow is still the same please contact us immediately and we will repair or replace the stopcock.

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In freezing weather if some taps are working and others are not, or the flow is very slow it may be that one section of pipe is frozen. If the taps are running okay in the bathroom but are not in the kitchen then it is very likely the kitchen cold water pipe is the issue.

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It is important not to defrost pipes quickly, so do not pour boiling water onto pipes. You could put a hot towel on the pipe, or in the case of the kitchen open cupboard doors. If you have a portable heater place it in the affected room but not too close to the pipe, regularly check to see if the water supply to the tap has returned.

What to do if you have a burst pipe

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- Immediately turn off the water supply at the stopcock
- Turn off the electric supply by opening your electrical distribution board and turn off the mains switch
- Open up taps in the bath/sinks to drain down the water system
- Soak up as much water as you can with towels etc
- Contact us, we will arrange for a plumber to attend and will visit your home to assess any damage and arrange for repairs to be carried out

If you turn on all your taps and no water is coming out it is likely that you have frozen pipes. Turn off the water supply at the stopcock and contact us, we can arrange alternative heating and can assist with the cost of running these.



Water damage can be costly if your personal possessions and belongings are affected. Albyn would like to remind you of the importance of having home contents insurance in the event of a burst pipe. Albyn is not responsible for any loss or damage to your own items and therefore recommend you take steps to protect your contents.

Please speak to us if you would like to know more about [low cost insurance](#) for social housing tenants.