

Preparing your business for winter

When Jack Frost comes knocking...

The extremely cold winters of recent years have led to many businesses sustaining losses from burst pipes, weight of snow on roofs and escape of water. There are a number of simple but effective steps businesses can take to both prevent and reduce the impact of cold weather on their operations.

Be ready...

Check you have the following things in place so you know you can react quickly if there is a problem:

- Make sure you know the location of all stopcocks and check that they are easily accessible and in good working order
- Keep a record of the layout of all the utilities that service your business, particularly water and gas/oil and check now that the pipes are in good condition
- Assemble a list of reputable local plumbers and boiler engineers and keep their details handy in case you need to call them in an emergency
- Ensure your heating system is serviced and maintained and that you have access to sufficient fuel should there be winter shortages
- Review the fabric of your building and consider where roofing may be vulnerable to heavy accumulations of snow
- Service heating systems at least once a year and consider installing a leak prevention system that allows you to switch off the incoming mains water easily and frequently.



Top Tip

In periods of cold weather, inspect your premises on a daily basis for signs of freezing.

During heavy snow, look for accumulations of snow on roofs and safely clear anything more than 4-6 inches

Overhanging icicles may indicate that guttering is not draining thawing snow adequately.

Be prepared...

Sprinkler Systems

- Contact your sprinkler system contractor and make sure your sprinkler system is prepared and 'winter safe'
- Systems that protect outdoor or cold areas such as valve chambers and pump rooms are especially vulnerable
- Heating should be maintained at or above 4 degrees at all times. Exposed pipe work should be lagged and routinely inspected and maintained

Helping prevent problems before they arise...

Avoiding burst pipes...

Floodwater, even if it's shallow, can be hazardous. Make sure you take the following precautions to keep you and your family safe from harm.

- Ensure any exposed pipes are protected from impact
- Use good quality insulation to protect pipes and tanks – external pipes, taps and hoses are particularly vulnerable to the cold so ensure they are adequately insulated
- Repair any dripping taps and leaking overflow pipes
- Ensure that the temperature in any building does not fall below 4 degrees.

This is particularly important at times when your premises may be unoccupied. Leave the heating on low and consider draining down water systems if your premises are left unoccupied for an extended period of time

- Ensure boilers are safeguarded against freeze and in particular drain and condensate lines.



Minimising damage...

If you are unfortunate enough to sustain a burst pipe, follow the guidance below to minimise damage and interruption to your business:

- Immediately turn off the water at the stopcock and drain the system
- Turn off any central heating to prevent damage
- Move any vulnerable stock or business equipment
- Never use naked flames to thaw frozen pipes or equipment
- 'Ice dams' can form on the edges of roofs from continued thawing and refreezing of melting snow. Water can 'back 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.

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