

Preparing your home for winter

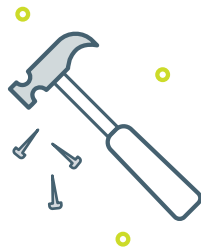
Understanding risks

Every winter millions of pounds of damage is experienced by households across the UK. Taking some basic precautions and planning ahead, can minimise damage and prevent most incidents altogether.

Protecting your home

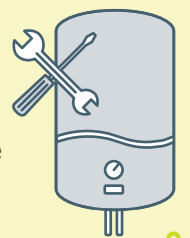
Here're some tips to help prepare your home for winter:

- **Reduce drafts** - look for small gaps around windows, fireplaces, and doors where cold air could be coming through and seal these with draft blockers
- **Keep your gutters clear** - regularly clear away any leaves located near gutters to prevent them from falling into drain pipes and blocking them
- **Check the roof** - make sure any broken or missing tiles or slates are replaced and other damage repaired. It's 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** - 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're going to be away for an extended period of time use a timer for your lights to come on at certain times each day. This will help make it look like someone is at home.



Preventing burst pipes

- **Protect pipes and tanks** with good quality lagging
- **Repair dripping taps & faulty ball valves** as they can cause waste pipes to freeze
- During freezing conditions **leave the heating on a constant low** level, and drain all equipment that is susceptible to condensation or freezing
- **Install a frost stat** to central heating and check it is working correctly
- **Service your heating system** every year
- Ensure **your boiler is safeguarded against freeze** - particularly drain and condensate lines.



Feeling prepared

- Make sure you know the **layout and routes of all water, gas and electricity services** within your home
- Know the **location of all main and subsidiary stop-taps** and ensure they're fully operational
- Keep the details of **reliable local plumbing contractors to hand** in the event of an emergency.

Going on holiday?

- **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**, or post 'check-in' statuses or photos while you are away.



Being storm ready

- Make sure your roof, chimney and any lightweight wall construction is **inspected and in sound condition**
- **Trees** which overhang or are in close proximity to buildings should be **inspected annually for safe condition**
- Ensure that **portable buildings**, such as sheds are **suitably anchored** and **outdoor equipment and materials** moved to a safe indoor location
- **Check the anchoring of roof-mounted equipment** such as satellite dishes and exhaust vents

