

Dealing with burst and frozen pipes

Frozen pipes

If the water in your pipes has frozen, it's important to try and defrost this as quickly as possible. The expansion of the water could cause the pipe to burst, leading to thawed water leaking from the break. This simple advice should help you get things fixed quickly.

Turn off the water supply

Turn off the main stop tap. You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home. If you have a cold water tank, turn off the stopcock (this is usually found in the attic or loft).

Protect your possessions

If a pipe appears to be frozen, protect everything around it to avoid damage if it bursts.

Thaw it out

You'll need to thaw out the pipe. First, open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen (so the water can flow through once it's melted). Using a hot water bottle or hairdryer, carefully thaw the ice in the pipe (starting at the tap end and work back toward the cold water tank). Don't ever use a heat gun or blow torch.

Burst pipes

A burst pipe is classed as a water emergency – it can cause serious damage to your home's structure and electrical wiring. It's vital to take action as soon as you discover a burst pipe. Follow these directions to get things back to normal fast:

Turn off the water supply

Turn off the main stop tap. You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home.

Drain the system

Then drain the system by turning on all your cold taps and flushing your toilets.

Turn off water heating systems

Switch off the central heating, immersion heater and any other water heating systems. If the central heating uses solid fuel, let this die out. Once water heating has shut down, turn on the hot taps to help drain the system.

Turn off the electrics

If water leaks near your electrics or electrical appliances, switch off the mains immediately. If the mains switch is wet, don't touch it or you could risk electrocution! Call a Pad-2-Let for a qualified electrician immediately.

Be safe

If water has been leaking through for some time and the ceilings are bulging, rooms may not be safe to enter. If you notice the leak quickly you can catch dripping water in buckets. If the ceiling starts to bulge, punch a small hole in it with a screwdriver to let the water drain.

Fix the problem

If the leak is in a screw fitting, see if you can tighten it. If the pipe is split or pierced with a nail then it needs to be repaired. Buy a DIY kit which replaces the broken part with a piece of new pipe. Full instructions will be included. If you're at all unsure about doing the job yourself, call in a professional plumber to repair the problem.

Prevent burst and frozen pipes

A burst pipe can wreak havoc on your home and its contents. Avoid the damage and hassle caused by burst or frozen pipes by following some simple winter care tips.

Get insulated

Insulate your loft and the sides of your water tanks. To prevent your pipes bursting, wrap them in lagging (a foam material that insulates and reinforces them). You can buy this from most DIY stores.

Keep out the cold

Most modern boilers have a frost protection thermostat which turns on automatically if the temperature drops to a level that will cause your pipes to freeze. Check that this is working properly. As added protection, it's also best to open the loft trap door and sink cupboards on cold days to let heat in. In very cold weather you'll need to leave your heating on low (or set to come on a couple of times a day), especially if you're going away.

Find your stopcock

Make sure you know where your stopcock is. Check regularly that you can turn it off easily in an emergency. It's handy to label it so you remember where it is in a panic.

Check them regularly

If you're away for a while, ask a friend or relative to check your home regularly to make sure that your pipes haven't burst or frozen.

Maintenance is key

Re-washer dripping taps: If they freeze, they'll block the pipe.

Remember, the advice given above is general and if you are in any doubt whatsoever, you should always consult a qualified plumber or Pad-2-let.

[If you need further advice of assistance please contact pad-2-let](#)