

 Open & Direct

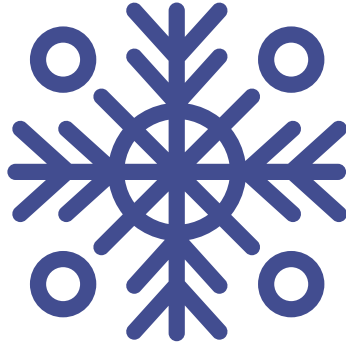
CUSTOMER GUIDE  
**ESCAPE OF WATER**

WINTER EDITION



# ESCAPE OF WATER

Freezing temperatures can lead to an influx of new freeze-related claims as homes are adversely impacted by burst pipes - one of the most damaging causes of Escape of water due to the vast amount that can escape at a staggering speed.



Properties that are not permanently occupied such as holiday homes or unoccupied properties, are at a greater risk of more severe damage due to the delay in the homeowner discovering the leak and notifying their insurer.

Although not all leaks can be prevented, there are steps that homeowners can take to reduce the risk of them occurring.

---

## HOW TO PREVENT SERIOUS WATER DAMAGE IN YOUR HOME

1. **Regular check-ups** of your heating system to ensure your boiler is running effectively check for leaks and check your thermostat is working properly.

2. Get any **visible signs of leaks** such as damp patches or brown marks on ceilings or walls investigated by a professional.

3. Get a **leak detection device** which can monitor your water use and can switch off the water if it detects a leak.

4. **Check your fixed appliances** - radiators, dishwashers and washing machines are common causes of water damage in the home. Ensure pipework is regularly checked for leaks and signs of cracking or bulging.



5. **Clear blocked drains** - avoid pouring any cooking fat, grease or oil down the drain as these can easily cause blockages which may lead to escape of water. Leaks can also occur from showers and baths where the drains become blocked and overflow.

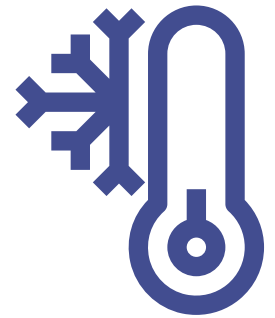
6. **Check your bathroom for cracked or damaged tiles**, sealant or grout and replace if required.

7. **Locate your stopcock** - this will normally be located below your kitchen sink, or wherever the water supply enters your home. Make sure you can access it and close it easily.

8. **Drain your system** - if you're planning on leaving your property unoccupied during winter, turn off the stopcock and drain the plumbing of both hot and cold-water systems.

9. **Lag pipes in the loft** - Pipe lagging should be at least 5cm diameter and even thicker if your loft floor is well insulated, as this prevents heat from your home rising into the loft and warming the pipes. Insulate the sides and the top of water tank to prevent that heat from escaping.

10. **Keep the heat flowing** in unoccupied homes while you are away. It's also advisable to leave your loft door open in your absence, as this allows heat to circulate around your tank and pipes.



11. **Checking your pipes** for signs of freezing or bursts such as leaking or dripping joints, will help you to deal with potential problems before the water escape. Repair any dripping taps before icy temperatures set in to prevent them freezing and becoming blocked.



12. **If your pipes do freeze** - turn off your water at the mains as a precaution. Also turn off the stopcock on the water tank in the loft, if you have one. You can then proceed to thaw the pipes yourself, or call on the expertise of a plumber. To thaw the pipes yourself, use gentle heat from a hairdryer or hot-water bottle and work your way from tap to tank. Open the tap nearest the frozen section of pipe to see when the ice has melted. You'll need to prepare for any water that may leak from burst pipes, primarily by covering any electrics that are nearby.

# HOW TO REDUCE FURTHER WATER DAMAGE IN THE EVENT OF A LEAK

## 1. Turn off the water supply

Switch off your stop-cock to prevent more water from feeding into the pipes and causing further damage. Once the water is off, turn on all of your cold taps to drain any excess water out of the system.

## 2. Consider turning off the electricity

If there is any chance that water could have leaked onto any electrics, you should turn off the electricity supply immediately at the fusebox.

You may be able to just turn off the affected areas, but if in doubt just turn everything off – make sure you have a torch if it's dark. Electrical wiring or sockets that may have got wet can be dangerous so do not touch them.



## 3. Turn off the heating system

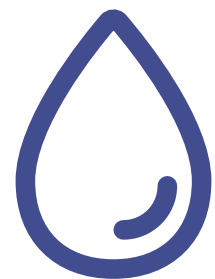
Turn off any immersion heater and central heating system to prevent heating the system while it is empty, as this could cause damage. Turn on all hot water taps to drain any excess water out of the system.

## 4. Check for water damage

Check ceilings for bulging caused by water pooling above. Stay clear of any ceilings which are bulging significantly, in case they should collapse. For any ceilings starting to bulge, and providing it is safe to do so, you could make a small hole to allow the water to escape slowly into a container below.

## 5. Consult a professional

For your own safety, try to have another person with you when you move around the property. In addition, make sure you consult a plumber and electrician before the water and electricity are turned back on.



---

**Check your Home Insurance policy for your escape of water cover and limits.**

---