



Minimise the risk of Frozen Pipes & Water Tanks

Before the cold weather arrives you are advised to take the following steps.

1. Know the location of the stopcock. The stopcock is the valve, usually located on / under the public footpath or roadside in front of your house, which allows you to turn off the water service pipe to the property. Ensure that you can open the cover to and operate this valve. A stopcock valve-key may be required.
Fill the stopcock chamber with non absorbent material such as Styrofoam beads or Aeroboard to provide insulation. Don't use absorbent material - it will act as a conductor for the frost.
2. Where possible, measure the depth from ground level to the stopcock. If it is less than 450mm (1.5ft), you should seek a plumber's advice on having the stopcock lowered or otherwise protected against frost. This also applies to the small pipeline from the stopcock to the house - in some houses these pipes may be laid at a more shallow level nearer to the house
3. Learn the broad layout of your domestic plumbing / water supply system. Know where the water service pipe enters the house and where any controlling valves are. Know where your storage tank is (usually in the attic).
4. Wrap up the pipes and water tanks with good quality foam lagging insulation. Don't insulate underneath your attic tank: the warm air from below will help prevent the tank from freezing.
5. Fix any dripping taps - the gentle trickle of water can freeze and completely block a water pipe.

During the cold weather you are advised to do the following:

1. Let warm air circulate through the building, and occasionally leave the attic hatch open to allow warmth to enter the roof-space.
2. If the house is unoccupied, consider leaving the central heating on at a low level, or else turn off the water supply with the stopcock and drain the system by turning on a tap on the ground floor. Ask your neighbours to keep an eye on the house in case of water leaks.
3. Do not leave taps turned on all night. This will place severe pressure on the water supply and the Council will have to turn off the water supply in certain areas to prevent reservoirs emptying.
4. If your neighbours are away, or there is an empty house or building nearby, make regular checks to ensure no pipes have burst and water is flowing inside the building.

What you are advised to do if a pipe or tank becomes frozen:

1. Turn off the water at the mains stopcock.
 2. Consult a plumber.
 3. Before you start to thaw the system, remove any furniture or equipment that may get damaged by melting ice and water.
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4. If there is no flow from the cold tap in the kitchen, it is likely that the stopcock or the supply line from there to the house is frozen. It may help to pour warm water over the stopcock - do not use boiling water or a naked flame for this purpose.
5. If you can identify the pipe that is frozen and it is above ground, gently warm the frozen pipe with a hairdryer or hot water bottle. Start nearest the tap first.

What you are advised to do if a pipe or tank bursts:

1. Turn off the water at the main stopcock immediately. If there is a control valve inside the house turn this off as well.
 2. Switch off all central heating and other water heating appliances.
 3. Drain the water from the system by turning on all the taps.
 4. Call in a plumber to make the repairs.
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