

Advice for consumers during freezing weather conditions

WATER & FROZEN PIPES

When we experience freezing temperatures, it is possible that water pipes can freeze and burst. Householders are responsible for the pipes within their property. Below are some simple steps you can take to help avoid frozen pipes and what you should do if you have a burst pipe.

Preparation to prevent frozen and burst pipes

- Know where the internal stop tap/valve is (usually under the kitchen sink) and how to turn it off.
- Make sure pipes and tanks are insulated properly.
- Fix dripping taps - a trickle of water can freeze and block a pipe.
- Have a SNIPEF (Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation) registered plumber's telephone number to hand.
- Contact SNIPEF on 0131 225 2255, e-mail: info@snipef.org/ or visit: www.snipef.org/
- If you are going away consider leaving your central heating on low and if possible, leave a key with a neighbour, friend or family member that can check your home for frozen pipes.

Consumers who have a disability, are an older consumer, have a serious medical condition or need extra help for any other reason can join NI Water's Customer Care Register by phoning Waterline on 08457 440088.

What do I do if my pipes are frozen?

- Turn off your water supply at the internal stop tap/valve.
- Try pointing a hairdryer (switched onto the lowest setting) or wrap warm cloths or hot water bottles around the pipes. Begin from the end of the pipe nearest the tap. Be careful not to heat the pipes too quickly as this could cause them to burst. Never use a naked flame such as a blow torch or candle to thaw the pipes.
- Don't leave taps dripping or running as the pipes below may be frozen. Call a SNIPEF (Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation) registered plumber and ask for advice.

How do I deal with burst pipes?

- Turn off your water supply at the internal stop tap/valve.

- Try to block escaping water with towels.
- Open all your taps to reduce flooding.
- Call a SNIPEF (Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation) registered plumber for advice.
- When the burst pipe has been fixed, remember to turn off all taps – this especially applies to vacant properties and out-houses.
- If you see any burst water mains report these to NI Water 08457 440088.
- Don't forget to check any vacant, isolated or outbuildings for bursts or leaks.

For more information contact Waterline on **08457 440088** or visit: www.niwater.com. Water line is open 24/7 including the Christmas period.

Tip - NI Water has a video on their website, which shows you how/where to look for pipes that can potentially freeze and how to turn off your water if a burst happens. Watch the video at www.niwater.com/frozenpipes.asp

ELECTRICITY

Plan ahead

If you are a prepayment gas or electricity metered customer, ensure it is topped up before Christmas, as some Paypoint outlets will be closed over Christmas. You can also top up your electricity meter online, visit <https://www.niepayments.co.uk/home/display>

Be prepared for a power cut:

- Know where your household fuses and trip switches are.
- Test smoke alarms regularly and fit new batteries in torches and radios (for checking updates on news bulletins). You can also use your car radio.
- If you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of formula milk and prepare a flask of hot water to prepare and heat bottles and baby food.
- If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health contact NIE to get on their critical care register on **08457 643 643**.

What if I have a power cut?

If a power cut affects your area, you can get some useful information from www.nie.co.uk/customerinformation/customerinfo.htm

NIE Energy

Telephone - 08457 455 455

Minicom - 08457 147 128

Website - www.nieenergy.co.uk/index.php/customer-care-register

Airtricity

Telephone - 0845 601 9093

Website - www.airtricity.com/ni-domestic

Those who rely on life support electrical equipment –

If you rely on life support electrical equipment you must be registered on NIE's Critical Care Register. Once on the list, NIE will treat you as a priority during a power cut. They will provide you with the most up to date information and when they expect a fault to be fixed. This will allow you to make alternative arrangements. You can also nominate a carer or relative for NIE to contact during a power cut.

NIE will also tell you about any planned interruptions to your electricity supply at least three days in advance, how long the interruption is expected to last and keep you informed of any changes during the interruption.

To join the register contact NIE on 08457 643 643 or visit:

www.nie.co.uk/customerinformation/pdf/critical_care.pdf for more information.

HOME HEATING OIL

1. Check your oil tank regularly.
2. If you need to order oil:
 - Consider delivery time as well as price when you shop around.
 - To find the cheapest oil in your area, use the Consumer Council's online oil price checker www.consumercouncil.org.uk/oil-price-watch
- 3) If you do run out of oil you can buy an emergency oil drum, (beware that the these drums are often three times (per litre) more expensive than a regular fill), Only use emergency oil drums as a stop gap until your oil delivery arrives.

There is also some very helpful practical advice and information on Age UK's website: www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/get-involved/spread-the-warmth/winter-wrapped-up

GAS

If you have a gas emergency, call the National Gas Emergency Service for free 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0800 111 999.

Be Gas Safe and only a Gas Safe registered engineer to fix or service your gas appliances.

Visit www.gassaferegister.co.uk/learn/winter_gas_safety_tips.aspx for more information.

Phoenix Supply Ltd

Telephone - 0845 900 5253

Minicom - 028 9055 5801

Website - www.phoenixsupplyni.com/at-home/help-and-advice/phoenix-energy-care-scheme/

Firmus

Telephone - 08456 08 00 88

Textphone/Minicom - 08456 03 10 08

Website: www.firmusenergy.co.uk

For further information visit www.consumerCouncil.org.uk

TRAVEL

Bus and Trains

Translink are running Christmas Schedules across their Metro, Ulsterbus and Railway services.

Passengers are advised to contact Translink for up-to-date information on 028 9066 6630, opening hours: Monday – Friday 7am to 8pm and Saturday/Sunday 8am to 6pm. Information is also available from: www.translink.co.uk The Translink Contact Centre will be open until 8pm on Christmas Eve. It will be

closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The Centre will re-open on Monday 27th December at 7am.

Airlines & Ferries

During the Christmas period, check for delays and cancelations with your airline and airport or ferry operator:

Aer Arann

00353 818 214 214

Aer Lingus

0871 718 5000

BMI

0844 848 4888

BMI Baby

0905 828 2828

Continental Airlines

0800 028 3687

easyjet

0871 244 2366

Flybe

0871 700 5000

Jet2.com

0871 226 1737

Manx2.com

0871 200 0440

Ryanair

0871 246 0000

Airports

George Best Belfast City Airport	028 9093 9093
Belfast International Airport	028 9448 4848
City of Derry Airport	028 7181 0784
Dublin	00353 1814 1111

Ferries

Stena Line - 08447 70 70 70

P&O Irish Sea - 0871 66 44 777

DFDS Seaways (formerly Norfolkline) - 0844 499 0007

Housing Executive Tenants

In the event of an emergency repair being required during the evenings, weekends or holidays, tenants are advised to contact the Housing Executive Emergency Out of Hours Service on 03448 920 901.

The Consumer Council has a statutory remit to resolve complaints about buses, trains, planes, ferries, natural gas, electricity, natural gas, water and coal. If you have a complaint, contact the Consumer Council and we can investigate the complaint on your behalf **0800 121 6022** or complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk
