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November 2005

Produced by Northumbrian Water's  
Corporate Affairs and Environment  
team - Ref: BTF/11/05.



# Beat the freeze

Some common sense tips to look after your home this winter

Here are some great tips to help avoid frozen and burst pipes during the cold weather spells.

## Be prepared

- If you're going away this winter, try to leave your heating on at a low level to keep your home frost free.
- Make sure your pipes are properly insulated, inside and out.
- Make sure you know where your internal stopcock is and that it works. (The internal stopcock can usually be found under the kitchen sink.)
- Keep the name and number of a plumber at hand in case of emergency.
- Remember all pipework on your property (both inside and outside your home) is your responsibility.

Keep this leaflet in a safe place for reference, after you have carried out our tips.

## Background heating

- If possible, set your heating to come on for short periods every day to help prevent pipes freezing.
- Bank up fires to keep your home warm and use small fan heaters in cold rooms.
- Beware of fire risks and **never** use a heater in the loft or attic.
- Check for draughts around windows and doors and insulate where possible.
- If you are going away from home and cannot take any of these steps, you should turn off your water supply at the internal stopcock and drain your pipes and tanks.
- If you are leaving your home empty over the winter, ask a neighbour or friend to visit your home regularly to turn your heating on and off or use the timer on your central heating system.

Even inside your home, a pipe can freeze overnight, if it is near a draught . . . check now and block that draught . . . it will also help save money on your heating bill.



## Inside and out

- Make sure all pipes and tanks in the loft are lagged. However, don't lag under the tank, as heat rising from your home will prevent this area freezing.
- Only lag pipes with material approved to British and European Standards, available from your local DIY or plumbing shop.
- Check the ballcock in your loft tank and toilets to make sure they work freely. A faulty ballcock setting could leave the valve open and the tank could overflow.
- Make sure your loft tank has a lid and that it is fitted properly and insulated.
- Check round the house for pipes in exposed places which are unlagged such as unheated garages, and out-houses. If possible, turn off the supply to your garden tap and drain the pipe.
- If your internal stopcock will not turn off, ring a plumber for help.

A word of caution . . . if we get long cold spells, static water in pipes will eventually freeze despite lagging.

## Know what to do if your pipes freeze

- Turn off the water at the internal stopcock.
- Turn off central heating boilers and put out fires which heat back boilers.
- Turn on all taps to drain the system, making sure you do not leave any plugs in.
- Watch the pipes for any splits which may develop.
- Apply gentle heat to the pipes. Use a hair dryer, heat lamp or fan heater. **Do not use** a naked flame or blow torch.
- Start at the tap and work away from it leaving the tap open to allow thawed water to escape.
- When you believe the pipe has thawed, turn on the water at the internal stopcock **slowly**.
- Check for bursts. If you find any, turn the water off again and call a plumber.

## Routine maintenance

- Dripping taps can waste 350 litres of water a week. They are also more liable to freeze.
- Make sure taps are properly turned off before you go out or go to bed.
- If your taps do drip you may need to replace the washer . . . **Call in a plumber to help you.**