

How to protect your home this winter

Art & Private Client

As the days get shorter, there's no escaping the fact that winter is coming. Some simple home maintenance checks can help reduce the risk of cold and wet weather causing damage to your property.

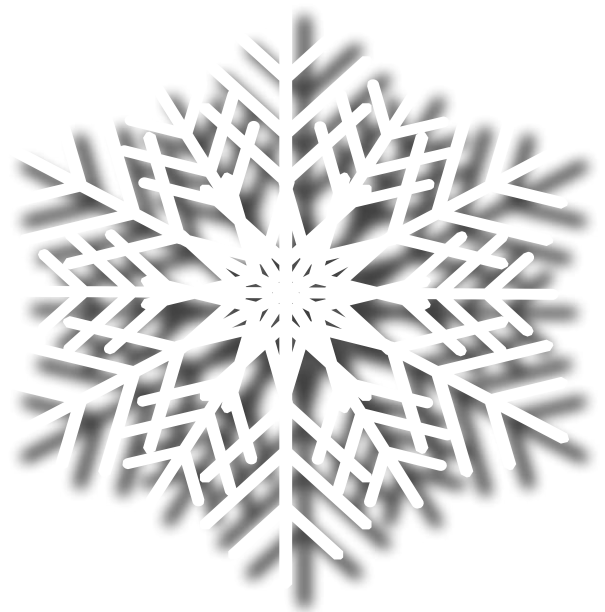
By giving your home a winter health check now you can make sure you have done all you can to protect your home.

Caring for pipes in your home

Every winter, thousands of people suffer from frozen pipes at home but there are some simple steps you can take to reduce the risk of freezing and subsequent bursts.

How to prevent burst or frozen pipes

- Keep your heating on low to maintain a temperature of 10°C – this will help keep pipes from freezing.
 - Keep pipes well maintained – where possible check they are not cracked or damaged. Fixing small problems before they get worse can help prevent a claim on your home insurance.
 - Check that pipe work, cisterns and tanks in unheated areas like lofts, cellars, basements, garages and outbuildings are appropriately insulated. If you find exposed pipes, consider insulating them with waterproof foam lagging.
 - Check you know where your stopcock tap is and that it works – if you suffer from burst water pipes during the winter you will need to turn it off quickly to prevent water escaping and causing damage. Stopcocks can be found under the kitchen sink, ground floor bathrooms, basements and garages.
- And if you're away, make sure that pipes and water tanks don't freeze in your roof space – you can open the loft door to allow the warmer air from the house to circulate. If you are going away for a long period either leave your heating on at minimum setting of 10°C or turn your water off and drain your system limiting the damage to your home as well as arranging to someone to check on your property daily.



Preparing your home

Keep your home warm and protected this winter with these steps:

Central heating

Having not used the heating all summer, many people turn on the central heating for the first time in months and discover that it is not working. Plumbers and heating engineers can find themselves inundated as people panic because it's getting colder outside. Before you call anyone out, it's worth checking your water pressure, it should be on one bar to keep it working most effectively.

Even in the summer it is advisable to run your heating at least once a month to keep it running efficiently and clear the boiler pump of any grit that gathers when it's not in use.

Maintaining the warmth

Other than keeping your boiler in check, keeping your home warm in the winter months can be helped by a few quick tricks. Bleed your radiators every few months to keep them running efficiently, draw curtains to prevent window

draughts and if you have a chimney, use a draught excluder to prevent cold chills getting in.



Windows

You should also check for bad paintwork and damaged seals on the windows, if there are gaps, water may be let in which could cause the window to swell, jam or rot.

Garden furniture

Pack away summer garden furniture, children's toys and barbeques, it will keep them safe and prevent damage from being left outside over the winter, it also stops them becoming potential hazards themselves. Don't forget to roll up garden hoses and keep them inside too.

Guttering and drains

Make sure that gutters and drainpipes are clear of leaves and other debris. If it rains heavily and the gutters overflow this can lead to water getting into the masonry.

Fences

Carry out repairs in weaker sections of fences. We recommend you make sure they are stable and secure before winter arrives.

Check your roof

Loose tiles can easily become dislodged during high winds and storms and this can lead to damage to the fabric of the building.

Ice and snow

If you clear snow and ice outside your home yourself, be careful; you should never use water to clear snow as it can refreeze and turn to black ice. Spreading salt or sand on the area you have cleared will help to reduce the risk of black ice developing. You can use ordinary table or dishwasher salt.

What to do if you're going away

If you're going away, it's worth getting someone to check in and keep an eye on your home, especially over the Christmas period. If you are away overnight, leave the heating on at 10°C so that warm water is circulating around the pipes.

If you're away for longer, there are some useful tips to help protect your home:

- Royal Mail Keepsafe service can prevent a pile of post accumulating which can be a tell-tale sign there's no one home.
- Don't over-share your travel plans on social media or otherwise- you never know who could be watching.
- Install a light timer.

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