

How to handle frozen pipe emergencies

A frozen pipe is an emergency, because this will cause it to burst causing thawed water to come pouring from the break. The following steps describe what you should do as soon as you discover a frozen pipe:

1. Turn off the water supply

Turn off the main stop tap. You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your flat. Turn off the stopcock in your cold water tank if you have one, it's usually found in the attic or loft.

2. Beat the burst

Protect everything around the pipe that appears to be frozen to avoid damage if it bursts.

3. Thawing out

Open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen so the water can flow through when it has melted.

Thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer (taking care to keep it well away from any water), beginning from the tap end and working back toward the cold water tank. Never use a heat gun or blow torch.

Preventing Burst Pipes – Winter Care

If a burst pipe leaks and water comes gushing through the ceiling, it can wreak real damage on your flat and your Contents. Even worse, burst pipes and leaks can be complicated to fix, repair work may also involve digging up your lawn, tarmac or paving.

You can avoid this kind of damage by preventing burst pipes and leaks in the first place. As frozen pipes often burst, winter care is crucial. Try the following care tips:

Insulate your loft and the sides of your water tanks. Insulate all your pipes. Open the loft trap door on cold days to let heat in. If you're away for awhile, spending winter somewhere warmer perhaps, then ask a friend or relative to check on your home and make sure pipes haven't burst or frozen. Re-washer dripping taps because if they freeze they'll block the pipe. This will also it will save up to a litre of water a day and your money if it's a hot tap. Make sure you know where your stop tap is and check regularly that you can turn it off easily in an emergency. It's handy to label it so you remember where it is in a panic. In very cold weather the heating will need to be on low, or set to come on a couple of times a day, especially if you're going away. Most modern boilers have a frost protection thermostat, which turns on automatically if the temperature drops to a level that will cause your pipes to freeze.

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