



Preventing Frozen Pipes

Frozen pipes can swiftly turn a magical winter into a miserable one.

When pipes freeze, the build-up pressure can cause them to burst – potentially resulting in significant water damage to your home and the beginnings of an insurance claim.

Here are our top tips in preventing frozen pipes:

Check your loft

Most houses have pipes and water tanks in the loft. These are particularly susceptible to freezing, so make sure that they have adequate insulation around them. All pipes and tanks in these areas require lagging. Pipe lagging should be at least 5cm diameter – thicker still if your loft floor is well-insulated, as this prevents heat from the house rising into the loft and warming the pipes naturally.

Don't insulate underneath your tank

Pipes should be insulated all the way round, but it's essential you don't insulate the underneath of your tank. Warm air from the room below helps to keep the tank heated, so insulate only the sides and the top to prevent that heat from escaping.

Fix that tap

Repair any dripping taps before icy temperatures set in. If you don't get round to it, and the water freezes, it will block the pipe. Also, make sure you know where your water mains stop valve is located – and that you can turn it off and on.

Keep your heating on

If you leave your home unoccupied for a short while, leave your heating on its usual setting (or just a few degrees lower) while you are away. It's also advisable to leave your loft door open in your absence, as this allows heat to circulate around your tank and pipes.

In the event of a freeze

If, despite your best efforts, your pipes freeze, turn off your water at the mains as a precaution. Also turn the stop-cock on the water tank in the loft, if you have one. You can then proceed to thaw the pipes yourself, or call on the expertise of a plumber.

To thaw the pipes yourself, use gentle heat from a hairdryer or hot-water bottle and work your way from tap to tank. Open the tap nearest the frozen section of pipe to see when the ice has melted. You'll need to prepare for any water that may leak from burst pipes, primarily by covering any electrics that are nearby.

To avoid the misery of frozen pipes this winter, take sensible precautions before temperatures drop too low. It's especially important to put measures in place if you plan to leave your home for any significant length of time.

How to deal with Frozen Pipes

With temperatures reaching in the -20°C in many parts of the UK recently and staying below zero for long periods of time, freezing pipes can become a common issue.

Here's our step by step guide on the best way to prevent frozen pipes from bursting and causing damage to your home.

Step 1 – The frozen pipe

If the pipe is heated too quickly it could burst, so make sure you turn off your heating system. Move or protect any items which are near to the frozen pipe in case it does burst.

Step 2 – Turn off the water supply

Always make sure you know the location of your stop cock in case of emergency, it will normally be located below your kitchen sink, or wherever the water supply enters your home. Make sure you also turn off the supply to any tanks or cisterns located elsewhere throughout the house.

Step 3 – Thawing the frozen pipe

Only ever use a gentle source of heat to try to melt the frozen part of the pipe – a hairdryer or hot water bottle would be ideal. Open the tap nearest to the frozen section to allow the water to drain away as it melts, and then gently warm the pipe from the end closest to the tap moving further away gradually.

Step 4 – Turn off the heating system

Turn off any immersion heater and central heating system to prevent heating the system while it is empty as this could cause damage. Turn on all hot water taps to drain any excess water out of the system.

If you can't follow these steps...

If you can't access the frozen pipe or turn off the water supply, you will need to call a professional to handle it for you. Do not turn on the main heating, but use alternative heating and await help. You can also contact your insurance company and they may be able to organise someone to come and take a look for you.

Raising the property temperature gradually through other means may help thaw the pipe, but make sure you keep an eye on it in case it does burst.