

DECEMBER 2011

VOLUME 1
SPECIAL
EDITION

TRIANGLE

Housing News Winter Focus Edition

In this issue

Our cold weather action plan 1

If the worst happens 2

Abandoned properties 2

The mains water off, can I use my central heating? 3

Are you insured? 4

Emergency contacts 4

Dealing with freezing conditions 6

Stay Healthy 6

Travelling 6

Welcome

To our special 'Winter Focus' edition of Housing News. We have issued it to help our tenants prevent or avoid damage to their properties caused by extremely cold weather, such as that experienced last festive season. This edition also provides practical advice on what to do if pipes freeze or burst.

Please keep this newsletter for future reference. It contains useful information and telephone numbers. If you have a gas boiler, please place this newsletter in your gas boiler safety and servicing pack.

Last year our contractors and staff dealt with the large number of emergency calls well. However we wish to improve our performance this year should we experience weather extremes. In preparation for cold weather this winter, the Senior Management Team and Property Services Coordinator have:

- Developed a cold weather action plan.
- Consulted with our main contractors regarding enhanced cover over the festive period.
- Our out of hours call service has been reviewed and recommendations implemented.
- We will operate a rota system to provide enhanced cover over the holiday period so that Triangle staff can prioritise work orders and support tenants.
- We have acquired a supply of electric oil filled radiators to provide emergency home heating should oil or gas heating systems fail.
- We have made improvements to the pipe work of some of our condensing gas boilers so that they perform during extreme cold weather.
- We have taken onboard recommendations made by our insurer to help protect our properties.
- Void properties have been protected against frost damage.



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE | Silver



If the worst happens.....

Dealing with Burst Pipes



The first thing to do is turn off the main stop-tap / valve, which you'd usually find under the sink in your kitchen. However it can be situated elsewhere. This will stop the flow of any further cold water from coming into your house and help limit water damage. This is the first and most important step you should take. Prepare for this now, please go and try to find the stop cock for your property. when you find it, put the free yellow band we've enclosed with this letter around the pipe next to it. This will help you locate it quickly in an emergency.

Burst pipes and Electrical Fittings

Electricity and water do not mix! If any water has come in contact with electrical fitting it will be necessary to isolate the power to that circuit, if there is extensive water damage to the property, it may be necessary to switch off the mains electricity altogether.

Remember you can always contact the Maintenance Department of 0282766680 if you have any questions, for out of hours and emergency repairs telephone 08007313081.

Can I phone the Water Service about my burst pipe?

Please note that the Water Service does not have a responsibility for burst pipes that occur inside the home, and therefore offer limited help. However consumers can contact Customer Services by telephone on 08457 440088, text phone 08457 023206 and via e-mail: waterline@waterni.gov.uk general water supply queries or external leaks.

Abandoned Properties

Do you believe that one of our properties has been abandoned by the tenant. If you are sure a property is not being lived by the tenant or has been abandoned, please phone us on 02827666880, we'll check it out straight away. You do not need to give your name or address, but please make sure that the information you provide us with is correct!

For an out of hours emergency, Triangle Tenants should phone the Telecare Service on 0800 7313081



The Water Service is not responsible for burst pipes within the home



Electricity and water do not mix!

The mains water is cut off, can I still use my central heating?



Last year temperatures were the coldest for 100 years

Read this before using your immersion heater



Know which type of central heating system you have before switching in on!



Last festive season many mains water pipes froze or burst due to the extreme cold weather. Temperatures were the coldest for 100 years. The very rapid thaw resulted in significant supply interruptions.

We received a number of calls from tenants asking whether or not they could continue to operate their heating system after the mains water supply was disrupted. This will depend upon the type of heating system you have installed in your property. For more advice, please contact the maintenance department on 02827666880

If you have a “Combi” style boiler, in other words where no hot water cylinder is fitted and you have a direct hot water system connected directly to the gas boiler, you can run your heating, however you should not attempt to use hot water. When the mains water is turned off, there will be no supply of water to the direct hot water system of the boiler, the boiler safety system will cut off due to low pressure.

If your property has Economy Seven fitted your heating will be unaffected, however you must switch off and not use your immersion heater. If you have a fireplace in your home which burns solid fuel, you should not light your fire when the mains water is turned off. This also applies to both open fronted and close fronted fire places. In general, if you have a heating system which has a cold water storage tank (typically found in the attic) it will be safe to continue operating the central heating if the mains water is cut off.

However, you must not run water from the hot water taps. After the mains water supply is cut off the system will not be replenished. Do not run the system dry, you may generate airlocks within the system, even after the mains water supply is reinstated, the system will not function correctly, the airlocks will cause issues. If you accidentally run the cold water storage tank dry after the mains water has been cut you **MUST NOT** use the central heating, it will be dangerous.

Other Important points to note:

If the mains water is cut off, please avoid using your washing machine and dishwasher. Be careful switching on immersion heaters, the element can be destroyed if it is not completely covered by water. The above is a general guide only, if in doubt contact the Maintenance Department.

Are you insured?

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement, Triangle Housing Association are not responsible for damage to furnishings or the personal belongings of tenants. The Association will make good damage to the fabric and fittings caused by frost or extreme weather.

However, as a responsible tenant you are expected to maintain a reasonable amount of heat in your home to help prevent internal pipe work freezing, please read our guide carefully.

We highly recommend that you consider taking out home contents insurance. A great many reputable insurance companies offer good value insurance to tenants. The Association does not recommend any particular insurer, however we advise that you shop around and if possible go online to gain the best possible value. Please think carefully about taking out insurance, remember it could happen to you! Consider how you would go about replacing all the items in your household. Don't be afraid of having to pay a large sum up front for a policy, many insurers offer weekly or monthly payment plans, just ask!



The Association is not responsible for damage to furnishings or personal belongings!



The Telecare Number is for Emergencies and out of hours use only

Emergency Contact Numbers

You might find these useful this winter!

Triangle Repair Line (Office Hours) **0282766680**

Out of Hours Repairs (Emergencies only):

Telecare: 08007313081

Northern Ireland Electricity Emergencies

08457643643

Northern Ireland Water Faults and Emergency Service

08457440088

Gas Leaks and Emergencies (Phoenix and Firmus)

0800002001



You are expected to maintain a reasonable amount of heat in the property



Ensure all taps are turned off!

Locate the stop-tap / valve



Open the Roof space trap door



Dealing with freezing conditions

Each year as a result of extremely cold weather, burst pipes cause many householders a considerable inconvenience and costly damage to their home and belongings. Houses in rural or isolated locations are particularly vulnerable. A few simple steps can reduce the risk considerably. This guide has been produced to benefit all householders, even those who are not tenants of the Association, so please encourage friends and relatives to read this article. If you are a tenant, please feel free to contact the Maintenance Department of 028766680 should you have any further questions about protecting your home from frost damage.

How to Prevent Frozen and Burst Pipes

- Even if you are out, keep the home as warm as you possibly can. Set the central heating controller to come for small periods throughout the day and night.
- Open the trap door to the roof space to allow hotter air from the house to circulate, this will help stop pipes freezing in the attic.
- Permit hotter air to circulate through all rooms by leaving doors slightly ajar for each separate room
- Open the doors to the sink unit to help hot water circulate around the pipes, stop cocks are often located here.
- If you have a light in your attic, fit a standard 100 watt light bulb to it (it must not be an energy efficient one) and leave it switched on, this will help keep the chill out of the roof space.
- Ensure that all taps are turned off completely, especially last thing at night.
- Familiarize yourself with your water supply system, locate the main stopcock which turns off the water supply to your property. In the event of a burst water pipe, turn this off. It is handy to know the location of the stop cock in the event of any plumbing emergency.

Dealing with a Frozen Pipe

In the event of a pipe freezing:

- Try putting a hot water bottle or a heavy cloth soaked in hot water over the frozen pipe. When thawing a pipe, start at the end of the pipe nearest the radiator or tap and work away from it.
- Never ever use a naked flame or heat gun to thaw a pipe.

Keep Safe and Healthy

Stay Healthy

- Wear the correct type of clothes for colder conditions, this applies indoors and out. The right clothes can help keep you warmer. Clothing made up of a few layers is best.
- Look after anyone you know who is vulnerable people in the estate. Make a point of calling in with them, make sure they warm and safe and have enough provisions in.
- Maintain a balanced diet. This will keep you warm and healthy through winter remember to eat at least one hot meal a day. This is especially important if you are elderly.

Travelling

- If you have to travel, please allow extra time for the journey in icy or snowy conditions. Reduce your speed to a sensible level, allow a greater distance to stop than usual. Avoid breaking suddenly. Use downward gear changes to reduce speed, let your engine help with the braking.
- Do you really need to go out? If possible make essential journeys only. Pay attention to weather warnings being given on the television and radio.
- If possible, use main roads, these are much more likely to have been gritted.
- Store a piece of old hessian backed carpet or thick cardboard in your boot. You can put this under your car driving wheels should you get stuck in heavy snow or ice.
- Keep plenty of petrol or diesel in your car, avoid driving around with the tank close to empty. If you get stuck in snow, you'll need to keep the engine running in order to keep warm.
- Pack shovel in the boot of your car to allow you to dig the car out and take along a blanket or sleeping bag in case you get stuck and have to wait for help.
- Use public transport if possible - bus routes are more likely to be cleared and gritted

Even though great care has been taken in the preparation of this newsletter Triangle Housing Association accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the content within this newsletter. Images are for the purposes of illustration only.

TRIANGLE
building homes
providing support
creating possibilities



Silver



Triangle Housing Association, 60 Eastermeade Gardens, Ballymoney BT53 6BD

E: info@trianglehousing.org.uk www.trianglehousing.org.uk



028 2766 6880