

## What should I do if my water is cut off?

If your water supply is cut off at the mains it will affect your heating system. Check what type of system you have and follow the advice below:

### Any heating system with a cold water storage tank and hot water cylinder

If the water supply is cut off but your cold water storage tank is full, it's still safe to run your central heating but don't use your hot water, as you risk running the storage tank dry and creating an airlock. If your cold water storage tank has run dry, do not use your central heating or your hot water as this could cause your hot water cylinder to collapse.

### Combi-boiler

You can use your heating but you must not use any hot water from the taps.

### Economy 7

Turn the immersion heaters off. There should be two switches in your hot press.

### Solid fuel central heating system

If you have a back boiler on your fire (ie if your fire heats water or radiators in your home) do not light your fire while the water is off. Once the water supply has been restored, light only a small fire at first.

## Important general information

- Don't use your washing machine, your dishwasher or the chilled water dispenser sometimes found in American style fridge freezers.
- We strongly recommend that you don't use your immersion heater because you can burn it out if it's not completely covered by water.
- Remember, it's your responsibility to insure your home contents.

This leaflet is available in alternative formats. Contact your local district office.

**Housing  
Executive**

[www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)  
January 2010

# Prepare your home for cold weather



**information  
for our tenants**

Northern Ireland  
**Housing** Executive

## Protecting your home from cold weather

**When the weather becomes very cold, the water pipes in your home can freeze. This can lead to a burst pipe in the thaw, which can cause a lot of damage to your home and belongings. Remember, it's your responsibility to insure your home contents.**



### Tips to prevent frost damage

- Leave the central heating on for short periods of time throughout the day.
- Let warm air into your roofspace by keeping the trap door open.
- Keep the cupboard door under the sink open.
- Keep room doors slightly open to allow the warm air to move around the house.

### What to do if your pipes freeze

- Turn the water supply off at the stopcock.
- Thaw along the pipe, starting from the end nearest the tap.
- Put hot water bottles or a thick cloth soaked in hot water over the frozen pipe, or use an electric hairdryer at its lowest setting to thaw pipes. Be careful not to warm them too quickly or they may burst. Don't use a blow lamp or any naked flame.

### What to do if a pipe bursts

- Turn off the stopcock by turning it clockwise.
- Try and block the escaping water with towels or other thick cloths.
- Turn off your central heating, immersion heater and any other water heating systems. If the central heating uses solid fuel, let this die out.
- Once you have shut down your water heating, turn on all your taps to drain the system. Flushing your toilet several times will also help.
- If water leaks near anything electrical, switch off the mains electricity immediately. If the mains switch is wet, don't touch it as you risk electrocution!
- If water has been leaking through for some time and the ceilings are bulging, rooms may not be safe to enter. If you notice the leak quickly you can catch dripping water in buckets. If the ceiling has just started to bulge, you could punch a small hole in it with a screwdriver to release the water.
- Call us on **03448 920 901** or report the problem online at **www.nihe.gov.uk**
- Don't forget to turn off your taps once the problem is fixed!

**If you are a Housing Executive tenant,  
call us on our repairs number**

**03448 920 901**

**Remember, it's your responsibility  
to insure your home contents**

### How do I find my stopcock?

The stopcock is a valve for turning off and on the cold water system in your home. Turn the stopcock in a clockwise direction to shut the water supply off. You can turn the water supply back on by turning the stopcock in an anti-clockwise direction.

Stopcocks are usually found in your kitchen, below the sink unit. However, in some houses the stopcock is found in a front or back hall or in a larder unit beside the sink unit. It is important that you know where the stopcock is and that you check that your stopcock is working.

### How do I check my stopcock?

Run the cold water tap in your kitchen and turn the stopcock in a clockwise direction to check if the cold water turns off. If you find it difficult to turn or it isn't working, call us on **03448 920 901** or report the problem online at **www.nihe.gov.uk**

If you cannot find the stopcock, you can call us and make an appointment for a maintenance officer to visit your house and show you where it is.