

Avoid water loss this winter

Prepare now for freezing conditions

Despite the best efforts of your local group water scheme, many householders and farmers were seriously inconvenienced over the past two winters as connection pipes and tanks froze solid and pipes burst in attics or in farmyards.

Insert image of freezing water valve/snow etc...

While your group scheme is happy to provide advice where such problems occur, members should realise that responsibility for all pipe-work and fittings from the boundary box at the water main to the point of use is solely their responsibility.

Image of meter with insulation

Image of home piping wrapped in insulation

Image of stop tap

True, we may not experience such low temperatures this winter, but given the pattern of the past two years, doing nothing about exposed pipes and fittings is simply not worth the risk. If your pipes or tanks froze last winter they may do so again, unless you take steps now to avoid this happening!

Amongst the measures that can be taken, we strongly advise the following:

- Ensure that your water connection stopcock/meter box is not left exposed to frost damage.
- Connection pipes need to be buried deeply enough to avoid severe frost damage, especially where they run under concrete or tarmac.
- Protect all exposed pipe work, cisterns, tanks, taps and water meters in unheated areas with waterproof foam lagging or insulation.
- Know where the stop-tap is located in case it needs to be turned off in an emergency. The main stop-tap is usually found at the point where the pipe work enters a premises, while in smaller properties and homes it is often under the kitchen sink. If there is none, have your plumber install one.
- Where possible, keep buildings warm – set central heating on a low heat or a 24-hour constant setting in freezing conditions.
- If premises are going to be left unoccupied for a number of days with no heating, ensure that someone is tasked with checking the property for signs of a burst pipe in the event of freezing conditions. Where very cold weather is forecast, you might consider turning off your water at the stop-tap and draining down your attic tank before leaving.
- In so far as possible, farmers and others relying on a continuous supply should have at least one day's water storage at their premises.
- Farmers should insulate pipes in cattle sheds and consider installing a single valve that will turn off field connections in the vicinity of the farmyard.
- Water to out-farms should be turned off at the individual meter box as soon as cattle are housed for the winter.
- Where you suspect a leak, call a plumber without delay and have it located and fixed.
- Under no circumstances should blow lamps or scalding water be used to defrost meters. Such practice increases the risk of prolonged water loss to your neighbours as well as your own home.

Remember, eliminating water wastage by avoiding leakage is in everybody's interest, so take immediate steps to avoid leaks and bursts on your premises.

Issued by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes