



For tenants

# Winter-proof your home

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## Contents page

This comprehensive guide equips tenants with essential strategies for a secure and cosy winter season.

From weatherproofing entry points to emergency preparedness, discover crucial tips to ensure safety, warmth, and comfort throughout the colder months in your rented home.

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## Taking care of your property in winter

As we step into the winter season, our experienced Property Management team have come up with their most valuable tips and guidance to help you navigate and manage any maintenance challenges that might arise during your tenancy at this time.

While you will be responsible for minor repairs in and around the property, your landlord must still act on all major maintenance jobs that you report to them or your letting agent. The most common problems that arise during winter include:

- Repairing burst or leaking pipes
- Electrical issues, i.e. short circuits and power outages
- Heating/hot water system issues
- Condensation and mould



Whilst it is down to landlords and contractors to fix all major maintenance issues, there is a lot you can do in order to help prevent incidences of such severity from occurring. Follow our handy guide to find out how.



# Heating and boilers

## How to keep your boiler working over winter or if you go away

To keep your boiler working during winter or when away, set the thermostat to a minimum temperature to prevent freezing, insulate exposed pipes, and regularly service the boiler. If you're away, have a friend or neighbour check on your property to ensure the heating system is working properly by turning radiators on from time to time.

**If it's safe and convenient to do so, please perform the following checks on your boiler before reporting an issue, check the following:**

- Electricity and boiler turned on
- There is enough credit on the meter
- Thermostat is turned on.
- Reset boiler and consult your boiler manual for specific guidance
- Check boiler pressure. Refer to your boiler manual to find out what the correct pressure should be and how to re-pressurise your boiler.
- Usually, the ideal boiler pressure is 1-2 bars



## What to do if your pipes are frozen

If your pipes freeze, turn off the water supply to prevent further damage. Then open faucets to relieve pressure and use a hairdryer or warm towels to thaw the pipes slowly. Never use an open flame. Seek professional help if needed and take preventive measures to avoid future freezes.

## How to check your Thermostat is working

If your thermostat isn't on and you have done all of the above, check if the batteries need changing. To check if a boiler thermostat is working, turn it up several degrees above room temperature and listen for a click. Then, wait for the heating system to start. If there's no response, consult a professional to diagnose and repair the thermostat.



## Heating systems and radiators

We recommend doing a full check of all the radiators in your home every couple of months. You may be experiencing issues with your radiators heating up. If the top of your radiator is cold but the bottom is warm there is too much air trapped in the system and you need to bleed your radiator.

### Before bleeding your radiator:

- Turn off your heating and ensure all radiators have completely cooled down
- Although a screwdriver can be used for some modern radiators, most radiators require a radiator key to bleed. If you don't have a radiator key, you can pick one up from most DIY stores
- Ensure you have a cloth and a bucket below the radiator valve to catch any water
- If more than one radiator is cold, there may be a problem with the whole system that needs to be checked by an engineer

# Leaks and water

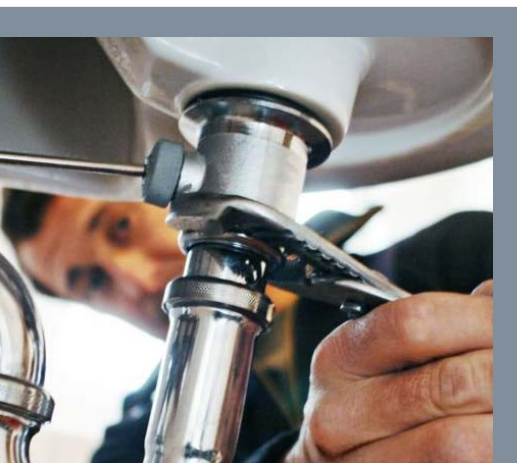
## How to handle water leaks

If the leak cannot be contained and/or it is causing damage to the property (especially if it is penetrating into an electrical fitting) it is classified as an emergency and its repair must be scheduled as soon as your landlord or letting agent receive your request.

To handle the issue short-term, if safe and convenient to do so, the water should be turned off immediately using the stopcock. The stopcock is usually turned clockwise to stop the flow of water. The stopcock can typically be located:

- Underneath the kitchen sink
- In an airing cupboard
- In the basement
- Under the floorboards by the front door

If the leak is coming from the above or an adjacent property, you must try to contact those occupants immediately.



## How to unblock drains

Cold weather can cause drain blockages due to the expansion of water as it freezes inside pipes, leading to pipe cracks or damage. This can result in debris and grease getting trapped in the damaged areas, causing blockages. To unblock drains, you can use a plunger, drain snake, or chemical drain cleaner.

You can prevent future blockages by avoiding pouring grease down drains, using drain screens to catch debris, and insulating exposed pipes to minimise freezing. Regular maintenance, like professional drain cleaning, can also help prevent blockages by keeping your drainage system free from buildup and damage caused by freezing temperatures.



# Lighting and security

## Fittings upkeep

By being proactive and taking these simple steps, you can help maintain the functionality and safety of lighting fixtures throughout the winter months, contributing to a more comfortable and well-lit living space. Always communicate with the landlord or property manager regarding any issues requiring professional attention to ensure a well-lit and safe living environment.

- **Regular cleaning:**

Dust and debris can accumulate on light fixtures, affecting brightness and efficiency. Wipe down fixtures with a soft, dry cloth to keep them clean

- **Check for bulb replacement:**

Replace any dim or non-functioning bulbs promptly. Consider using energy-efficient LED bulbs, which are not only cost-effective but also perform better in colder temperatures

- **Inspect for damage:**

Check for any visible damage in fixtures, such as cracks or exposed wiring. If damage is noticed, inform the landlord or property manager immediately for repairs

- **Keep fixtures dry:**

In areas prone to leaks or moisture, be vigilant in keeping fixtures dry to prevent electrical issues or damage

- **Address condensation:**

During colder months, condensation may form on light fixtures, especially in high humidity areas like bathrooms. Wipe away moisture to prevent damage to the fixtures

- **Outdoor lighting:**

If the property has outdoor lighting, ensure it remains unobstructed and clean. This is crucial for safety and visibility during winter nights

- **Timer and sensors:**

If applicable, check timers and sensors on outdoor lights. Adjust the settings for shorter days to ensure lights turn on at the appropriate times



## Staying safe

During the winter months, maintaining property safety and security becomes even more critical due to the unique challenges posed by colder weather. Here's how tenants can specifically adapt safety measures during this season:

- **Weatherproofing entry points:**

Ensure all doors and windows have proper weather stripping to prevent drafts and enhance security. Check for gaps or air leaks around these entry points, as they can compromise both safety and heating efficiency

- **Outdoor lighting for early darkness:**

With shorter daylight hours, ensure exterior lights are in working order. Consider installing motion-sensor lights or timers to illuminate pathways and deter potential intruders during longer nights

- **Communication:**

Maintain communication with the landlord or property manager regarding any winter-specific maintenance needs or security concerns

- **Snow and ice removal:**

Keep walkways and driveways clear of snow and ice to prevent slips and falls. Snow and ice can also obstruct visibility and compromise security, so regular removal is crucial

- **Heating safety:**

Ensure all heating sources are well-maintained and used according to safety guidelines. Clear any flammable materials from around heaters to prevent fire hazards

- **Winterising security systems:**

Confirm that security alarms and cameras are in optimal working condition, considering the impact of cold weather on their functionality. Ensure they're equipped to function well despite lower temperatures

Adapting safety measures for the winter ensures a secure and comfortable living environment. By being proactive and addressing these specific seasonal challenges, tenants contribute significantly to the overall safety and wellbeing of the property.



# Preventing condensation

As the colder months set in, it's important to keep your home comfortable and free from issues like condensation. Condensation occurs when warm, moist air hits cold surfaces, leading to dampness, mould, and potential damage to your property. Here are some simple tips to prevent and manage condensation in your home:

## Ventilate your home regularly

- Open windows or use trickle vents, especially after cooking, showering, or drying clothes
- Ensure that extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms are used properly and cleaned regularly
- Leave internal doors open to allow air to circulate throughout your home

## Keep your home warm

- Try to maintain a consistent temperature in your home, even if it's on a low heat and in unused rooms
- Use timers for your heating so that the temperature doesn't fluctuate too much, especially overnight
- Ensure radiators are not obstructed by furniture to allow heat to circulate effectively

## Use a dehumidifier

- Dehumidifiers can help reduce moisture in the air, preventing condensation from building up

## Avoid drying clothes indoors

- Where possible, dry clothes outside or use a tumble dryer
- If you must dry clothes indoors, ensure there is adequate ventilation (open windows or use a dehumidifier)

## Wipe down windows and surfaces

- Condensation often builds up on windows and cold surfaces. A quick wipe down in the morning can prevent excess moisture from lingering and turning into mould
- Use a clean cloth or squeegee to remove condensation daily, especially in high-humidity areas like the bathroom or kitchen

## Close kitchen and bathroom doors

- When cooking or showering, keep doors closed to prevent moisture from spreading to other parts of your home
- Use extractor fans or open windows to let steam escape immediately

## What to do if condensation appears:

If you do find condensation in your home, follow these steps to address it quickly:

- **Ventilate:**

Open windows to let fresh air in

- **Heat:**

Keep your heating at a low, constant level

- **Wipe down surfaces:**

Remove excess moisture from windows and walls daily

- **Report recurring issues:**

If condensation leads to persistent damp or mould, report this to your landlord or property manager to address any underlying structural issues



## Additional resources:

For more detailed advice on managing condensation, you can visit these helpful guides:

- [\*\*Energy Saving Trust - Condensation and Mould\*\*](#)
- [\*\*UK Government Housing Health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\)\*\*](#)

By following these steps, you can prevent condensation from becoming a bigger problem during the winter months and keep your home warm and comfortable!

# Contact us

**0121 321 1313**

If you have any remaining questions or queries about how to protect your rental property over the winter months, please contact your property manager or the wider team and we will be happy to help.

## Fixflo

Our 24/7 online maintenance reporting system, Fixflo, records all of your upcoming, ongoing and completed maintenance requests.

Simply sign in to your account to view the current status of the work required on your property.

[johnshepherd.com/renting/report-a-repair/](https://johnshepherd.com/renting/report-a-repair/)

## In case of emergency

In the case of an emergency or an out of hours issue, please use FixFlo to report this. Below are the events that are deemed an emergency:

- Uncontrollable leak
- Cistern overflowing, not flushing or not filling with water
- Waste pipe leaking
- Macerator broken
- Pipe leaking under sink
- Property alarm does not turn off (constantly sounds)
- No hot water
- Cylinder leaking
- Boiler not working or pressure low
- Electric boiler not working
- No power
- No heating but hot water working
- No heating or hot water
- Heating programmer not working
- Room thermostat not working
- Oil heater/boiler not working
- Oil heater/boiler leaking
- Underfloor heating leak or no heat
- Trip switch
- Soil pipe leaking
- Limited or no running water
- Smell gas or oil

Please note that if the cause of an issue is more severe than a quick visit and fix, contractors will, where possible, make a temporary repair to manage the situation. Due to the time of year and the potential unavailability of parts (with some businesses closed), some repairs may need to be scheduled for after the break.



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