

Some simple precautions to protect your house in freezing weather

When freezing winter weather arrives you can easily pull on an extra jumper or blanket to keep out the chill. But how do you protect your home from inconvenient problems – and potentially costly repairs?

The AA have provided some simple precautions that can help to reduce the risk of serious damage to your property.



Arthur's Seat enjoying the calm between the storms.
Home cold weather tips

Prevent frozen pipes in winter

Insulate your pipes and the loft water storage tank. Put the insulation foam on top of pipes rather than underneath them.

Turn off any indoor valves on pipes leading to outside taps, then open the outside tap and leave it open to let any water drain out.

Regularly check all the taps in your home during the winter months. If little or no water flows, there may be frozen water in the pipes.

If you are away from home in the winter, set the central heating to come on for a short period each day to prevent pipes from freezing.

Find out where the mains water stopcock is, and make sure it turns off easily. If your pipes do freeze, turn the water off and thaw them out slowly with hot water bottles. Never use a heat gun or blow torch.

Ask someone to check your home if you're away for a while. This should help make sure leaking or burst pipes are spotted early and damage is kept to a minimum (tell them where the stopcock is).

Freezing winter weather can bring problems for condensing boilers. They can sometimes shut down if the condensate pipe freezes – and leave your home without heating just when you need it most. See our tips on how to look after your condensing boiler.

Get ready for winter

Save a supply of drinking water for emergencies.

Repair any dripping taps – if they freeze, they'll block your pipes.

Clear leaves and debris from gutters to reduce the risk of dams that can turn to ice.

Insulate pipes in unheated areas like the garage.

Tidy away or cover garden furniture.

Check the outside lights are all working, or add a light to make access safer.

Keep yourself warm – enjoy a hot meal and drinks, and keep active.

Check for severe weather warnings in your area. If very severe weather is forecast, especially snow, leave your heating on all day at the usual temperature setting.

When snow is forecast, try to avoid making unnecessary

journeys, or wait until the roads have been gritted. If you need to clear a snowy or icy path or driveway, only do so if it won't pose a risk to your safety. It's also a good idea to buy de-icing salt for your drive or path before snow or ice comes.

Improve your energy efficiency

A good start is to fill any draughty gaps and also keep the heat inside your home. This will help save on your fuel bills too.

Block draughts from windows, external and internal doors, skirting, loft hatches, and pipes or cables passing through walls.

Draw the curtains at dusk and close internal doors to unheated rooms.

Insulate your loft – a quarter of your heat can be lost through the roof.

Get heating appliances serviced, or your chimneys swept to make sure that the fire burns efficiently.

Radiator reflectors will direct heat into the room and not out through an external wall (make sure the radiators are not covered by curtains or furniture).

Fit a thermal jacket around the hot water cylinder – at least 75mm thick – and check the thermostat isn't set higher than 60 degrees.

If your radiators have cool spots when the central heating is on, bleed them to improve their efficiency.

Set your heating to 18–21°C to keep your bills low, and to come on earlier and go off later rather than turning the thermostat up.

Remember not to block trickle or ventilation grilles and air bricks, as they're important to the performance of the building.