



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Customer Fact Sheet 4 Looking After Your Home

Q. What can I do to prevent damage to my heating and plumbing system during cold weather?

A. You can prepare for cold weather by locating the position of the water main stopcock in your Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and checking that it operates in case you need it. You should also report to Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Operations Accommodation any taps and cisterns that require attention and also any damage to insulation on outside pipe work. During severe weather you are responsible for ensuring the temperature in your SFA does not fall below 10°C. Keep doors of rooms without heating open to allow heat to circulate. Also slightly open your loft hatch to allow some warm air into the loft pipes.

Q. What about outdoor pipes?

A. You need to take special care with pipes leading outside the house. For outside taps you should shut off any isolating stopcock when not in use, and leave taps open. If you are unsure about what to do, your local Housing officer will be able to advise you.

Q. What precautions should I take if I am going away in cold or severe weather?

A. You are responsible for ensuring that adequate frost damage precautions are taken. You should therefore: (a) Leave central heating on permanently with the room thermostat set to minimum of 10°C. (b) Turn all radiator valves on to full, leave all internal doors open and slightly open your loft hatch. (c) Where possible, leave your keys with a trusted neighbour and ask them to check the house regularly.

Q. Will it be expensive to leave my heating on constantly?

A. No Heating left on like this consumes little fuel at a small cost. It really is far better to spend a small amount to prevent problems, than incurring the cost and inconvenience of a major clean up operation.

Q. What can I do to minimise the risk of fire in my home?

A. Never leave cooking, burning cigarettes or lit candles unattended. These are the main causes of home fires in the UK. Always place candles, matches and lighters out of reach of children and any pets. Also try to keep children and pets out of the kitchen during cooking. Ensure your kitchen is clutter free during cooking and keep candles away from flammable materials including curtains, flower arrangements and even television sets.

Q. What should I do if something catches fire in the kitchen?

A. If a pan of food catches fire, switch off the burner and smother the fire by sliding a lid or damp wrung cloth over the pan. To prevent flare-ups hold the lid or cloth firmly in place until the pan has cooled. (a) DO NOT attempt to remove it from the room. (b) NEVER throw water on a fat or oil fire! (c) In case of an oven fire, close the door and turn off the heat. (d) Call the Fire Brigade.

Q. What should I do if I smell gas?

A. If you smell gas, or suspect that you have a gas leak, you should extinguish all naked flames and cigarettes. Ventilate the property by opening windows and doors. Do not operate any electrical equipment (including telephones and mobiles) or light switches – but if anything is already switched on, leave it on. Evacuate the property and once outside call the Transco emergency number 0800 111 999 immediately.

Q. Can I use my loft for storage?

A. You may only use your loft for storage where it has been specially adapted for such use. This is if it has proper floorboards, a ladder and lighting. You should not overfill your loft and should allow adequate access in case of emergencies. For Health and Safety reasons, you must not use your loft for storage if it has not been adapted.

Q. I have a condensation problem in my SFA. What can I do to alleviate this?

A. Double-glazing, central heating and modern kitchens and bathrooms are all improvements that result in warm and draft-free homes. Unfortunately, these ideal living conditions are also the perfect combination for condensation to occur. You can also prevent condensation forming by taking the following steps: (a) Open the windows in your kitchen or bathroom when cooking or bathing or, where fitted, switch on extractor fans. (b) Avoid drying damp clothes on radiators – use airers instead. (c) Keep the ventilation grills on double-glazed windows open. (d) Use adequate ventilation when operating tumble dryers. The effect is worse in winter when doors and windows are firmly shut. The best solution is to ventilate your property as often as possible and ensure any vents in walls are kept uncovered.

Q. What if damage occurs in SFA?

A. DIO insurance covers damage to the structure and fabric of the property. If DIO are found to be at fault, you can pursue a claim for loss or damage to your personal possessions through MOD Claims Branch. Your local Housing Officer can provide advice on this process. If a situation has occurred as a result of your negligence, you will need to claim on your own home contents insurance. It is strongly advised that occupants take out such a policy. Where you are found to be negligent, you may be held responsible for costs of damage incurred to DIO property.

If in doubt on any of these issues, please raise your concerns with your local Housing Officer who will be happy to advise you.