



Winter Guide for Tenants

Emergencies

An emergency is classed as something that causes a risk to you or your property, such as a leak that cannot be contained or an electrical fault other than a localised power cut. See below a brief guide as to what constitutes an emergency and requires immediate attention.

What counts as an emergency?

- No water.
- No heating or hot water.
- No power – but check whether it is a power cut first before calling.
- Leaks that cannot be contained.
- If you cannot unblock a toilet and it is the only one in the household.
- A broken handle or lock that means you cannot secure or unlock the property.
- A broken window.
- If you have a gas leak or can smell gas, leave the property and phone the National Gas Emergencies number immediately on 0800 111 999.

Boiler

Most issues with your boiler will require an engineer to attend and repair. However, there are a few checks you can do before reporting the issue that may resolve the problem without having to call out an engineer.

Check the boiler pilot light is on

This is the small flame that lights the gas. If it is not on, refer to the boiler manual and if that fails please report on your PropertyFile.

Check the boiler for an error code

A quick look online should help you find the right make and model of the boiler and give you easy instructions to get it up and running again.

Reset the boiler

Unless there is an obvious leak, we always recommend resetting the boiler. Check the boiler manual for instructions on how to do this.

Test your radiators

Make sure your radiators are working correctly. If you notice that they aren't heating properly, there are cold spots, or they gurgle, bleed the radiators to let out trapped air. Radiator keys can be purchased on Amazon for a couple of pounds.

Check the water pressure

If you have no hot water, the water pressure could be to blame. If you have a hydraulic pressure gauge, you'll see low and high pressure indicated by red sections on the dial. On most digital gauges, you'll see a flashing pressure reading if there's a low-pressure warning. In such instances, check your boiler manual for instructions on re-pressurising (this means allowing more water to enter the system from the water mains supply).

Check your waste pipe

If you have no heating or hot water and your boiler is making a gurgling noise or shows an ignition fault code, it could be that your waste pipe (or condensate pipe) has frozen. You can try pouring hot water over your pipe externally to thaw the ice. Try to concentrate on any pipework that is horizontal, such as bends. If it works you should hear the ice begin to crack and it can sometimes shoot out of the bottom of the pipe like an ice-pop. This can sometimes take several attempts, and if it doesn't work you may need to contact the management team. Remember to only attend to pipes that are easily accessible and not to use boiling water, as this can be a safety hazard.

Check if it is a power cut

Call 105 to report a power cut to your Distribution Network Operator. You can also call this number if you are unsure and would like to find out if there has been a power cut in your area.

The Distribution Network Operator is responsible for restoring power to your home.

Check your fuse board

Check your fuse board for tripped switches. Use an online search engine to help you safely find the electrical item that's causing the RCD to trip.

When to call the emergency line

Providing that it is not a power cut or a tripped switch on your fuse board, having no power counts as an emergency. Please call 01787 888694 to report to the management team.

Gas

General gas issues

If you have a general gas issue please report to the management team.

When is it an emergency?

If you think you have a gas leak or can smell gas, leave the property, and phone the National Gas Emergencies number immediately on 0800 111 999. If you are at home, and you can do so safely, turn off your gas supply. The gas mains tap should be beside your gas meter.

Plumbing

Leaks

Leaks that cannot be contained are an emergency. Turn off your water supply and be extra careful if the leak is near electrics.

Blocked toilets

If the only toilet in the property is blocked, this counts as an emergency. However, if you cannot unblock one toilet but have another toilet in the property that you can use please report on PropertyFile, this is not an emergency.

Locks, Doors and Windows

Broken handles and locks

Broken handles and locks are only considered an emergency if you are unable to secure or enter the property. Any broken handles that do not present a safety issue should be reported on your PropertyFile.

Broken windows

Broken windows are an emergency as they compromise the safety of the property.

When to call the emergency line?

If a broken lock, handle, door, or window is the result of a break in, always call the police first. If not, please call the management team or, if out of office hours, contact 01787 888694.

Preventative measures

Prevention is better than cure, which is why we have compiled some top tips to prevent any maintenance mishaps this winter.

Heating

Test your radiators

Make sure your radiators are working correctly. If you notice that they aren't heating properly, there are cold spots or they gurgle, bleed the radiators to let out trapped air.

Going away?

If you're going away at all, leave your heating on a low temperature and leave the loft hatch open if you have one. Doing this will keep your property warm, avoiding mould and freezing pipes. (If you're going away for an extended period, please let the management team know in advance.)

Don't set the thermostat too high

This might seem counter-intuitive but the warmer your home is, the faster the heat will be lost to the outside. To achieve optimal comfort, it is recommended for homeowners to set their thermostats between 20 to 22 degrees Celsius.

Remember that boiler pressure and bleeding radiators are the tenant's responsibility

Water and Plumbing

These top tips are key to maintaining hot water and preventing leaks this winter.

Check your stopcock

Stopcocks are usually located under the kitchen sink or just as the water pipes enter the home. Locate your stopcock and check that it is working correctly. This will be essential to preventing further leakages if any pipes burst.

Make sure that pipes are clear

Put household drain cleaner down plugholes periodically to keep those pipes clear. And never let fat and food to go down kitchen pipes.

Mould

The cold winter months make it all too easy for mould and mildew to grow in your home.

Cooking

Cover pans and turn down the heat when boiling food. If you have an extractor fan, please use it, or open a window or trickle vent to change the air.

Drying clothes

Dry clothes outside or in a well-ventilated room or open a window to let the moisture out. Avoid putting wet clothes directly on radiators.

Bathroom

When taking a shower or bath, ventilate the bathroom by opening the window or turning on the extractor fan if there is one.

Furniture

Let air circulate by leaving a gap between furniture and walls. Do not place any furniture, especially sofas, flat against the wall.

Change the air

Open windows or trickle vents to change the air frequently. You can also purchase a dehumidifier or moisture traps to place throughout the property.

Catch it early

Wipe away moisture to stop mould developing. If you find mould, wipe it away.

Exterior

The exterior of your property gets the full brunt of the winter weather, it is therefore crucial to maintain it. Here is what to look for...

Peeling paint

Peeling paint could be a result of general wear and tear from the weather. But it could also be a sign of moisture penetrating the property, which could lead to mould inside the home. If the paint is peeling on your property exterior, be sure to identify the source and report to the management team if necessary.

Blockages in pipes, drains and guttering

Identify any blockages in the pipes, drains and guttering and make sure they are properly fixed. You can clear these blockages yourself or get a professional to look into the fixtures.

Please note it is the remit of tenants to ensure guttering and downpipes are kept clear and free of debris.

Vents

A clogged vent could lead to plumbing problems such as bad smells, empty toilet tanks and gurgling drains. Check the exterior vents in your home to make sure they are not clogged or obstructed, and clear away any leaves or debris to prevent blockages from occurring. If it becomes a recurring issue, contact the management team.

Garden

Gardens are often neglected in cold weather, which is why it is so important to prepare your garden for the winter months while the weather is still mild. Here are some things you can do to avoid garden disasters in the winter months.

Keep on top of fallen leaves

While it may look lovely and autumnal, fallen leaves can cause dampness and mould, not to mention a safety hazard. This could lead to rotting patios and decking. It is therefore important to rake up any fallen leaves.

Fences and gates

The winter weather is unpredictable, and you never know when a storm could take down your fence or gate. Before we descend into the depths of winter, check fences and gates are stable and secure. If not, flag this at your next property inspection or with the management team.

Pathways and decking

As well as removing fallen leaves, be sure to clean and clear pathways and decking. In wet and cold conditions this may become a slip hazard, especially if the weather gets icy.