

GAB Robins

Burst Pipe Advice



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Burst and Frozen Pipes

What to do when you have a burst or frozen pipe emergency, together with some preventative measures which will help to keep your home's water supply running smoothly.

A burst pipe can cause serious damage to your home's structure and electrical wiring. The following steps describe what you should do as soon as you discover a burst pipe.

Act immediately – the sooner you can stop the water, this will reduce the risk of further extensive damage.

Burst Pipe

1. Turn off the water supply.

Turn off the main stop tap – turn it fully clockwise

You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home.

Drain the system - turn on all your cold taps.



If water has been leaking through for some time and the ceilings are bulging - be careful, rooms may not be safe to enter. If safe, carefully punch a hole to let the water escape, and catch the water in buckets placed underneath. Again be careful in case the ceiling collapses. If in doubt do not touch the ceiling.



Partially collapsed ceiling

2. Turn off water heating systems

Switch off the central heating, immersion heater and any other water heating systems.

If the central heating uses solid fuel, let this die out.

Once water heating has shut down, turn on the hot taps to help drain the system.

3. Turn off the electrics

If water leaks near your electrics or electrical appliances, switch off the mains immediately. If it is wet, don't touch the fuse box.

4. Call a professional to repair the damage

Electrical wiring damaged by water can be very dangerous - you will need to call in a professional if this happens.

Contact a reliable plumber to repair the burst or frozen pipe(s).



Burst copper piping due to freezing



Cracked galvanised piping due to freezing

Frozen Pipe (if pipe is frozen but not burst)

A frozen pipe is also an emergency, because this will cause it to burst resulting in thawed water pouring from the break. The following steps describe what you should do as soon as you discover a frozen pipe:

1. Turn off the water supply

Turn off the main stop tap. You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home.

Turn off the stopcock in your cold water tank if you have one, it's usually found in the attic or loft.

2. Beat the burst

Protect everything around the pipe that appears to be frozen to avoid damage if it bursts.

Remove items like furniture and cover carpets (where practical) near where the frozen pipe is located.

3. Thawing out

Open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen so the water can flow through when it has melted.

Thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer (taking care to keep it well away from any water), beginning from the tap end and working back toward the cold water tank. Never use a heat gun or blow torch.

Preventing Burst Pipes - Winter Care

If a burst pipe leaks and water comes gushing through the ceiling, it can cause real damage to your home and its contents. Even worse, burst pipes and leaks can be complicated to fix, repair work may also involve digging up your lawn, tarmac or paving.

This kind of damage can be avoided by preventing burst pipes and leaks in the first place. As frozen pipes often burst, winter care is crucial. Try the following care tips:

- Insulate your loft and the sides of your water tanks.
- Insulate all your pipes.
- Open the loft trap door on cold days to let heat in.
- If you're away for awhile, spending winter somewhere warmer perhaps, then ask a friend or relative to check on your home and make sure pipes haven't burst or frozen.
- Re-washer dripping taps because if they freeze they'll block the pipe. This will also it will save up to a litre of water a day and your money if it's a hot tap.
- Make sure you know where your stop tap is and check regularly that you can turn it off easily in an emergency. It's handy to label it so you remember where it is in a panic.

In very cold weather the heating will need to be on low, or set to come on a couple of times a day, especially if you're going away. Most modern boilers have a frost protection thermostat, which turns on automatically if the temperature drops to a level that will cause your pipes to freeze.

**Provided by GAB Robins UK Ltd and
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