



# Information Sheet:

## Useful Tips for Water in the Home

As a valued customer, we have compiled this factfile for you to keep as an easy reference guide to the services in your home.

It includes essential information, such as how to avoid bursts, how to spot a leaking pipe, tips on how to thaw frozen pipes and easy checks you can make to ensure your safety and security.

### **Do you know how to turn off your water in an emergency?**

Your main stop valve can turn on or off the main water supply to your home. You should know where it is, so in the unfortunate event of a burst pipe, for example, you can quickly stop the water flow and minimise damage.

The main stop valve is generally found where the supply pipe enters your home. In most instances, this will be under your kitchen sink, or in your toilet. Once you have found it, check that it works; clockwise for off, anti-clockwise for on. If it's hard to turn, don't try to force it. If it is seized or broken, it should be repaired by a plumber. To prevent a stop valve from seizing, close and open it once or twice a year.

**Your stop tap will usually be found  
under your kitchen sink**



### **How to spot a leaking pipe**

#### **Inside your home**

If you can hear water moving through the pipes at night, you could well have a leaky joint. This can damage your property, or lead to contamination of your water supply. Other signs include damp or discoloured patches and mould on walls, ceilings or carpets.

If you suspect a leak inside your home, you should contact a registered plumber.

#### **Outside your home**

If there is a leak from the supply pipe into your home, you may well see a damp patch appearing on the ground, or flowers and areas of grass doing rather better than those around them, especially in dry weather.



# Information Sheet:

## Useful Tips for Water in the Home

### Are you prepared for cold weather?

During cold periods, many people have not prepared their homes for cold weather. A burst pipe in your home can cause lots of damage, and one of the major causes is frost damage through poor insulation.

Remember that burst pipes can happen on any day, even Christmas Day, so it pays to prepare in advance.

You can easily avoid this problem by taking a few simple steps to insulate your pipework.

Fully lag all pipes and tanks in the loft space, or anywhere else which may be liable to freezing - use pipe insulation.

Open your loft trap door to allow warm air from other parts of the house to circulate. Ask a friend or relative to visit your home while you are away. This will mean that, if you do suffer a burst pipe, it will be found within a reasonable time.

Leave your heating on while you are away from home. This will help prevent your pipes freezing.

Check your loft insulation is thick enough and still in good condition.



**Use an electric hairdryer at its lowest setting to thaw pipes, but don't warm them too quickly!**

### What to do if a pipe has burst

Turn off the water at the main supply stop valve.

Switch off the central heating and any other water heating installations at the same time to avoid further damage, or even an explosion.

Open all taps to drain the system.

Call for a registered plumber.

### The do's and don'ts of leaks.

If water is coming through the ceiling, collect it in buckets. If the ceiling starts to bulge, pierce the plaster with a nail or screw to let the water through - ensuring a bucket is underneath.

If your wiring, or any electrical appliances have been affected, do not touch them until they have been checked by a qualified electrician. If in doubt, turn off your electricity at the mains.

In the event of a flood.

If possible, leave windows, doors and built-in cupboards slightly ajar during the day.

Keep affected rooms heated, but do not over-heat them, as this could result in further damage.



# Information Sheet:

## Useful Tips for Water in the Home

### Do's and Don'ts of thawing frozen pipes.

- **Water can freeze in your pipes and cause damage by expanding until the pipe can no longer stretch to contain it. If your pipes do freeze, you must defrost them slowly and carefully.**
- **Firstly, turn off the water supply to your home at the stop tap (usually under the kitchen sink).**
- **Thaw along the pipe starting from the end nearest the tap.**
- **Use an electric hair dryer at its lowest setting to thaw pipes. Be very careful not to warm them too quickly.**
- **Don't use a blow lamp, heat gun or any other naked flame.**
- **Don't leave taps running or dripping. The water may not flush down the plug hole if the pipes below are frozen.**

### If you have lead pipes

If you have any lead pipework between the stop tap outside your home and your kitchen tap the best solution is to replace it with the latest pale blue medium density polyethylene pipe which is available from plumbers and building merchants.

If you do that you can ask the Water Authority to replace its part of the service pipe between the water main in the street and the stop tap, free of charge.

Grants are available for renovation and minor works for households on low income. Information about this may be obtained from the Department of Local Government and The Environment on 685954.

### Saving Water

Water is becoming an ever more precious natural resource. We all use a lot of water in our homes. The environment cannot sustain an unlimited increase in demand for water, so it is vitally important we use the water we need carefully and don't waste it.

Fit insulation to hot and cold water pipeworks. A lot of water can be wasted from running taps while waiting for them to get hot. Frozen pipes which burst during winter also waste water. If there is a long pipe run between your hot water tank and a basin or sink, you could consider installing a separate water heater.

**Make sure you repair any dripping taps or overflows**





# Information Sheet:

## Useful Tips for Water in the Home

### Tips

If you don't have a shower, the cost of installation could pay for itself in a few years from savings through fuel costs from heating the water. However, fast flow power showers can consume more water than a bath.

When you are cleaning the bathroom, turn the tap on only when you are ready to rinse down, and fill a basin or bucket of water instead of rinsing out the cloth under running water. Brush your teeth then rinse using a glass of water instead of leaving the tap running — you will save about four litres!

You will save a large amount of water by checking the temperature of your bath as it fills up. This will reduce the amount of cold water you have to add. Buying a new bathroom suite? Ask how much water it takes to fill the bath and flush the toilet before making your final choice.

Fit insulation to hot and cold water pipeworks. A lot of water can be wasted from running taps while waiting for them to get hot. Frozen pipes which burst during winter also waste water. If there is a long pipe run between your hot water tank and a basin or sink, you could consider installing a separate water heater. Gasping for a quick cup of tea? You'll get one more quickly if you boil only as much water as you need — it will save you water and electricity too. Instead of washing and preparing vegetables under a running tap, fill a bowl of water. Do your washing up in a bowl rather than under a running tap and use another bowl full of clean water to rinse or use both sides of a double sink.

It's worth looking round your new home and looking for any dripping taps. A dripping hot tap can waste up to 4000 litres of water, a year, as well as a lot of fuel, so it's well worth repairing. The most common cause is a worn washer. You may find it worthwhile to employ a plumber for an hour or two, or you may wish to replace the washer yourself. If you are unsure how to change the washer, call a registered plumber.



**Isle of Man Water Authority**

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