

Winter maintenance & advice for tenants



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An overview

The following advice can be applied all year round but is particularly relevant in winter as it gets colder, darker and wetter outside.

Safety & Security

Be sure to re-read the house guide, which provides further useful information. You should familiarise yourselves with where the fusebox, gas safety valve and water stop cock are and how they operate.

Take extra care in any outside space and when exiting the property - particularly if there are steps that may become slippery from snow or mud. You should regularly clean or grit any surfaces that could become dangerous if left untreated.

Test all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms to ensure they are working correctly and change the batteries if necessary.

Ensure all doors and windows are locked when vacating the property. If you have suitable blinds fitted, it is advised that they are half-closed so you cannot see from the outside whether the property is vacant.

If possible, it is advised that front doors are double-locked from the inside at night to prevent burglars 'jimmying' them open using a tool through the letterbox. Do ensure the keys are nearby (but out of sight) in case of fire. Keep car keys out of sight also.

Simple property maintenance

Where appropriate the tenant should check roofs and gutters for slipped or damaged tiles and for any leaks. Leaking plumbing, pipework or overflows as well as damp smells or flaking paint should be reported immediately as this may indicate a hidden problem.

Build-up of condensation can be more prevalent in winter as more heating is used, clothes are dried inside and there is a tendency to want all the windows firmly shut. However, it is important that tenants air rooms (particularly bathrooms and kitchens) to avoid condensation as water, heat and steam from showering/bathing, cooking and drying clothes can quickly cause issues with condensation.

To avoid condensation tenants should:

- Open windows throughout the house, particularly in bathrooms and kitchens and especially during and after showering/bathing and cooking.
- Use extractor fans when showering/bathing and cooking. Be sure to keep them clean and free of dust.
- Wipe down shower screens/curtains and the surrounding tiles after use.
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators or near walls.

Heating

Refer to the boilers instruction manual and familiarise yourself with how it is operated and controlled. This will ensure you are maximising its efficiency and are satisfied with the temperature and timings for the heating and hot water. It takes around 20 minutes for a property to warm-up or cool-down, so bear this in mind when setting your boilers timer settings. Where present, TRVs can be used to further optimise each room's individual temperature.

It is very important should you leave the property empty for more than 12 hours that enough heating is left on to prevent the freezing of the water system. If the heating is switched off it can potentially lead to frozen pipes and significant damage to the property. The simplest solution, if vacating the property, is to leave the heating on constant but to set the thermostat to a low setting i.e. 14°.

Over time the boiler may need re-pressurising. The boiler will have a gauge or digital display that shows the pressure; refer to the instruction manual as to the optimum pressure for your boiler; normally this is between 1 and 2 bar. If it is below this the pressure will need topping up so that the boiler operates correctly and does not cause damage to the system. Refer to the instruction manual as to how to do this.

If the radiators feel cold at the top but warm at the bottom they most likely need bleeding due to trapped air in the system. Bleeding the radiators will make them work more efficiently and save you money. It is important that you turn the boiler off before you bleed the radiators. Once bled, you should check the boiler pressure.

Electrics

Do not overload electrical sockets with appliances and Christmas lights as this can cause a fire hazard.

Avoid using candles, particularly near Christmas trees, decorations and curtains.

In the event of a fire there is a fire extinguisher and fire blanket in the kitchen. If the fire is too large to safely tackle, immediately vacate the premises and phone 999.

It is advisable to keep a torch in case of power cuts.

Summary

These simple steps should ensure your safety and security over the winter period. You may be liable for damage caused to the property should you ignore this advice and that contained in the house guide. The information should also minimise maintenance issues that might otherwise have occurred, which I hope will help to improve the enjoyment of your home.

If you wish to discuss the above information or are unsure of anything please do not hesitate to contact me.