

Irish Water urges customers to conserve water, protect their pipes and report leaks as severe weather hits

Irish Water has mobilised its crisis management team and is working closely with local authorities around the country to prepare for and deal with any operational impacts due to the severe weather that is expected to hit the country this week. To protect homes and businesses during cold spells Irish Water is urging customers to conserve water, keep their homes warm and report leaks.

During periods of very cold weather, the demands on water supply can be elevated and burst or leaking pipes can impact supply. Over the coming days, customers should try to conserve water where possible by reducing the number of times they use their washing machine or dishwasher and taking showers rather than baths.

Keeping your property warm is the best protection against frozen pipes. Irish Water advises leaving heating on for longer periods at lower settings, even while away and circulating heat throughout the home including the attic by opening the trap door or leaving a light on in it. Opening doors to unheated areas of your home occasionally to allow warm air to circulate can prevent pipes and tanks from freezing in the cold weather.

Irish Water advises everyone to know where the inside stop valve is located. This controls the water supply to properties. It is important to check to ensure it can be opened and closed easily in the event of a leak. If leaving your home for a prolonged period, it is important to turn off the stop valve and drain the system so there is no water in the pipes to freeze.

Other preventative measures include covering or sealing any gaps under doors and around windows as cold air coming from outside can cause pipes to freeze inside your home.

Customers who experience a loss of water pressure or an outage should check with their neighbours if possible and if it is safe to do so. If neighbours are similarly affected it is likely that a burst or leak has occurred and customers should telephone Irish Water on 1850 278 278.

According to Irish Water's Head of Operations Katherine Walshe,

"When the outside temperature drops below zero, unprotected pipes and dripping taps can freeze and crack. This can affect the water supply to your home or business. When the temperature rises again, these cracked pipes can then leak, causing damage which can be costly to repair.

"These bursts are unpredictable and may result in temporary outages for some customers as we make the repairs. Customers who experience a loss of water pressure or an outage should check with their neighbours if possible and if it is safe to do so. If they are similarly affected please call Irish Water on 1850 278 278. If it is only one household that is affected then the cause may be a frozen pipe. There is advice on what to do on the Irish Water website at water.ie."

"Customers can help to prevent pipe bursts in their own homes by keeping heating on for longer periods, even at low settings and allowing the warmth to circulate. As severe weather can also result in big demand increases on the water network, Irish Water is also urging customers to conserve water at this time."

"The water supply to the Greater Dublin Area is running at full capacity at the moment, so any serious bursts or leaks could potentially have a big impact. We are appealing to households and

businesses to conserve water, refrain from leaving taps running and to report any visible leaks. Unattended premises should be checked for possible burst pipes caused by freezing temperature.”

There is more advice on the Irish Water website www.water.ie and www.winterready.ie

Advice for frozen or burst pipes

If you have a basic knowledge of plumbing, these tips will help you locate and thaw a frozen pipe. If you are unsure of what to do, call a registered plumber.

- Turn off the water supply. This will limit the amount of leakage or damage if a pipe bursts.
- Find and turn off your inside stop valve.
- Turn off the stopcock in your cold water tank, usually located in the attic.
- Locate the pipe.
- Check the water pressure in appliances such as taps and toilets to see if it is lower than usual.
- Locate the general area where you think there may be a frozen pipe.
- Check for visible pipes that are not insulated, pipes that feel much colder than others, have nearby draughts or damage.
- Turn on nearby cold taps to relieve pressure on the frozen pipe. NEVER turn on the hot taps.
- Thaw the pipe

If the pipe and fittings are not cracked or broken, you can try gently thawing the pipe. Protect or move anything which might be damaged if the pipe bursts when thawed. Use a hairdryer on the lowest setting to gently warm the pipe, starting at the end nearest the tap. NEVER attempt to thaw out frozen pipes by switching on your immersion, central heating, using a blow torch, etc.

A burst pipe can cause serious damage to your home so it is important to take action as soon as possible. Limit the damage by turning off the water supply as instructed above. Drain the system by turning on all the cold water taps and flushing the toilets. Switch off the central heating and immersion. If you use solid fuel, let it die out. When the water heating is completely off, turn on the hot taps to further drain the system.

If water from a burst pipe is leaking near any sockets, switches or appliances, switch off the mains if it is safe to do so. If the switch is wet, do not touch it, instead call a qualified electrician.

If you have a shared water supply e.g. if you live in an apartment complex, ensure you have access to the stop cock. This is usually located where the water supply enters the building. Check with your neighbours that turning off the water has not affected their supply.

Get it repaired. You can make a temporary repair to a burst pipe by binding it tightly with a cloth or tape. Replace this as soon as possible by a permanent repair, carried out by a qualified and registered plumber.

Ensure your hot water system is refilled BEFORE you switch back on your immersion or boiler. Prevent frozen and burst pipes - visit Irish Water's [Winter Proofing page](http://www.water.ie) on www.water.ie for tips. If you have any concerns please contact Irish Water's Customer Care Team which is available 24/7, on 1850 278 278.