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Rest assured

System for dealing with repairs

Yarlington Property Management has a central point of reporting for all repairs, and a dedicated administrative team to handle and process the work.

Tenants and officers report repairs into the repairs line 01935 415202. For ease of use, this same telephone number is used for out of hours emergency repairs, as the telephone is switched to a call centre.

The Company sets certain time limits for different types of repairs. Examples of the different categories are detailed further on. The Company monitors the performance of its own employees and contractors to ensure that they meet these time limits, although in the case of certain emergencies it may not always be possible for a contractor to carry

out a complete repair within 24 hours. In this situation the emphasis is on attending promptly, maintaining a safe environment and completing the work as soon as is practically possible.

Definition of repair categories:

Emergency Repairs

The Tenant Service Authority definition of Emergency repairs is as follows: "Any defect which puts the health, safety or security of the tenant or a third party at immediate risk or which affects the structure of the building adversely"

The following repair items are taken from the Tenant Service Authority. This list is provided as an example only and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all emergency repairs.

- Gas leak
- Total loss of water
- Burst water main
- Flooding
- Severe storm damage
- Total loss of electricity supply
- Major fault with electricity supply
- Unsafe electricity fittings
- Breaches of security to outside doors and windows
- Total loss of gas supply
- Blocked flue
- Blocked main drains, soil pipe or sole toilet
- Heating loss for elderly/ vulnerable tenants, during the period 31 October to 1 May
- Hot water loss for elderly/ vulnerable tenants during the period 31 October to 1 May
- Failure of lift
- Failure of older person's alarm or call system
- Fire damage
- Offensive or racist graffiti.

The above are the only categories of work that we will attend to out of hours. You may be recharged for misuse of this service.

Urgent Repairs

- Plumbing leaks or defects
- Blocked drains, sinks, basins, bath, toilet
- Defective cistern or overflow
- Heating faults or breakdown
- Hot water faults or breakdown
- Heating loss for elderly/vulnerable tenants, or during the period 1 May – 30 October
- Hot water loss for elderly/vulnerable tenants, or during the period 1 May – 30 October
- Minor electrical faults
- Roof leaks
- Blocked gutters
- Severe dampness
- Breaches of security to internal doors and windows
- Failure of entry phone
- Repairs to void property
- Graffiti
- Faulty extractor fan
- Defective flooring
- Faulty communal TV aerial
- Damage to stair treads or hand rails/banisters.

Routine Repairs

The Tenant Service Authority definition of Routine repairs is as follows:

“Defect that can be deferred without serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to the tenant or a third party, or long-term deterioration of the building, and can wait until the next convenient maintenance visit.”

- General joinery repairs
- Repairs to doors, windows and floors
- Repairs to external walls, fences and paths
- Repairs to walls, brickwork and slates or tiles
- Repairs or clearing of gutters and downpipes
- Repairs to kitchen fittings
- Repairs to plaster work
- Dripping or leaking taps or shower units
- Other minor plumbing repairs
- Repairs to tiling
- Easing doors and windows
- Other minor day-to-day repairs or replacements.

In addition we have a responsibility to maintain the following in accordance with Safety Regulations:

- Gas and electric services from the meter.
- Water services; from the meter or outside stopcock.
- The internal structure: walls, ceilings and floors.
- Internal and external components: windows, doors, fitted cupboards, etc.
- The fixtures and fittings provided by the Company.
- Any Company-owned outbuildings.
- Original paths to main entrance doors.
- Communal areas in blocks of flats and housing developments or roads and footpaths which belong to Yarlington Housing Group.
- Communal and sheltered housing washing lines, rotary airers and laundry equipment when it is provided by the Company for residents use.
- Fencing that is a boundary to public areas, public footpaths, busy main roads, or areas of danger.

Repair priorities

Yarlington Housing Group has a policy of giving priority to elderly, vulnerable and frail tenants for some repairs. Please tell us when you report your repair if you are a member of this group.

All requests for repairs will be given a repair priority. This will be given to you at the time the order is raised. The classifications for all repairs, including electric and gas are as follows:

Priority Classifications for Repairs

Category 1

24 Hour Emergency Response in normal office hours

Category 2

Out of hours Emergency Response

Category 3

Urgent 7 calendar days

Category 4

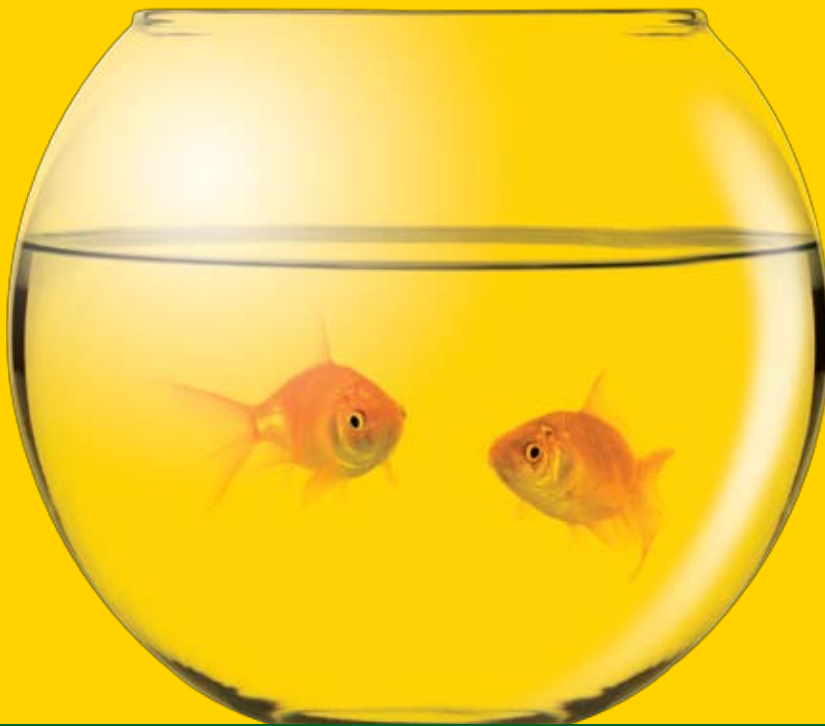
Routine 31 calendar days



Repairs which are the tenant's responsibility

You should consider very carefully the amount of contents insurance you have.

- Altering doors for carpets.
- All appliances, fixtures, fittings, extensions and additions where installed by you with or without permission unless these have been formally adopted by Yarlington Housing Group.
- The replacement of lost or damaged door and window keys, including the cost of breaking in and associated repairs and the replacement of locks and duplicate keys.
- Filling small cracks in the plaster.
- Replacing without delay any cracked or broken glass unless the breakage can be shown to be due to structural or constructional cause or criminal damage (reported to the police) and caused by someone other than yourself, members of your family or your visitors.



- The repair and replacement of TV aerials or satellite dishes (unless communal) and any damage to property or neighbouring property caused by their installation.
- The repair and replacement of clothes posts and lines and associated footpaths not to main entrance (unless communal).
- The plumbing in of domestic appliances and any faults that subsequently arise with this plumbing (unless installed by Yarlington Housing Group).
- The repair and replacement of all front and back gates and fences (unless there is a main or busy road or some other danger on the other side of the fence, or a legal obligation on Yarlington Housing Group to maintain them).
- The repair and replacement of toilet seats and lids.
- The replacement of light bulbs and fluorescent tubes.
- The replacement of bath, basin and sink plugs.
- The repair or replacement of your own shed, porch, conservatory or other external addition.
- The repair or replacement, where provided by Yarlington Housing Group, of a shed.
- The repair or replacement, where provided by Yarlington Housing Group, of rotary dryers.
- The repair or replacement, where provided by Yarlington Housing Group, of threshold mats.
- The repair or replacement, where provided by Yarlington Housing Group, of rainwater butts.
- Any internal decorations, which should be in good order when you leave the property.
- All making good and repairs when vacating the property.
- Sweeping of chimneys.
- Fencing that fixes the boundaries between two properties and is not adjacent to public areas, public footpaths, busy main roads, or areas of danger.
- The lifting of all foam backed carpet and or laminated wood flooring to gain access to carry out a repair.
- The repair or replacement of anything belonging to Yarlington Housing Group which is damaged or made defective through the action or neglect of you, your visitors or anyone living with you. For example drains blocked by kitchen waste and external gully grids blocked by leaves and debris, or damage caused by your appliances such as cookers.

Peace of mind

Emergencies

Yarlington Housing Group operates an emergency service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The telephone number is the same regardless of when you call: Repairs Line 01935 415202.

To help us accurately diagnose your repair please be ready to provide your name, address and telephone number and be as detailed as possible about the emergency you are reporting.

Providing the repair cannot be left until the next working day, we will get someone to you as soon as possible to do whatever is necessary to make things safe or useable. It may be necessary to return the next working day, during normal working hours, to complete the works.

It is stressed that the 'Emergency Repair Service' is for genuine emergencies only, and Yarlington Housing Group reserves the right to recharge for a 'call-out' in or out, of normal working hours, such as:

1. If a repair is found not to be a genuine emergency.
2. If you are not at home when the operative arrives (or alternative arrangements have not been organised for entry).
3. If it is found that the repair of the fault or damage concerned is your responsibility under the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement.

If the emergency is:

- a) A water leak from a pipe in your home - turn off the stopcock and drain the water pipes/ system by turning on the hot and cold taps in the dwelling. Extinguish solid fuel fires turn off immersion heaters, boilers and all other water heaters and the gas supply if necessary.
- b) A gas leak - turn off the gas - open the windows and doors, do not smoke or turn on any electrical switch.
- c) An electrical fault - do not touch the appliance, switch or socket.

Examples of the types of repairs that we would be prepared to do as an emergency are:

- Collapsed floors or ceilings.
- Unsafe masonry or brickwork.

- No water at the property.
- Unusable toilet if that is the only WC in the property.
- Blocked foul drains or toilets.
- Burst pipes or tanks or an uncontrollable flow of water.
- Serious water leaks through the roof or from another dwelling.
- Exposed live or bare wires or other serious electrical faults.
- Failure of passenger lifts in sheltered schemes.
- Failure of disabled facilities such as stair lifts and hoists.
- Total lack of light or power.
- Securing doors and ground floor windows. Repairing glazing.
- Blocked flue to an open fire or boiler.
- Gaining entry where keys have been broken or the lock is faulty. Where there is only one means of entry. (If keys are lost or have been damaged by you a recharge will apply).

Emergency staff will make a considered judgement whether the request is an emergency, especially where there is a total loss of heating and hot water in the winter months. If the call has been made early in the morning of a working day the works may be delayed until working hours have commenced.

Gas Escapes

If you become aware of any escape of gas, immediately telephone British Gas [Transco] direct on 0800 111 999 to arrange for them to come and make the leak safe. While you are waiting for British Gas, turn off the gas supply at the gas meter, open the windows and doors, do not use any electrical switches and do not smoke.

Breakdowns and Repairs

If a gas appliance such as central heating, gas fires or boiler breaks down, telephone the Repairs Line on 01935 415202.

If your gas-operated heating system cannot be made to work for some time, you will be loaned electric fan heaters until the system is working again. During periods of heavy demand, priority will be given to the elderly or families with young children.

Gas Appliance Servicing

Each year your gas appliances will be serviced to ensure that they are working efficiently and safely. You will be contacted with an appointment for our Contractor to attend to carry out this service. If you are unable to provide access please contact us to arrange a more suitable appointment, as abortive visits have to be paid for.

There is a legal duty placed upon Yarlington Housing Group to carry out this service and if necessary court action is taken against those tenants that will not provide access. The cost involved in taking such action is recharged to the tenant.



For Your Safety - Maintaining Your Solid Fuel Appliance

Ventilation Air is Vital - Heating appliances, whatever fuel they burn, need to be able to 'breathe' in order to function efficiently and safely. To 'breathe', they need a constant and sufficient flow of air so the room must not be completely airtight. If your home has draught-proofing or double-glazing fitted you may need vents or airbricks in an exterior wall of the room. If vents or airbricks are already there always ensure they are not blocked or covered.

Flue and Appliance Cleaning - To enable your appliance to 'breathe' efficiently it is absolutely essential that you do not allow soot or ash to build up where it can hinder or prevent the free flow of smoke and other products of combustion.

- Empty and check the ash can every day.
- Flue ways at the back of the boiler should be cleaned once a week, but always let the fire go out and allow ashes to cool before cleaning.
- The throat plates at the top of the roomheater should be removed and cleaned monthly.

- Appliances should be riddled daily.
- Thermostats to the appliance should be kept clear and checked daily.
- Have your chimney swept at least once every year, preferably before each winter. Always use a recommended chimney sweep, preferably a member of the National Association of Chimney Sweeps or the Guild of Master Sweeps, both being associations of true professionals in the field. Check in Yellow Pages or contact us for a list of members in your area.

Your Safety Checklist

- Proper ventilation.
- Regular cleaning and sweeping.
- Always use the right fuel.
- Never leave an open fire unattended without a fireguard.
- Always use a securely fitted fireguard when children are in the house.



Yarlington Property Management supply Carbon Monoxide Alarms as standard. It is imperative that these are kept in working order and the batteries are not removed. If you require an alarm to be installed contact the call centre on the number below. If you have a solid fuel appliance and have not got a carbon monoxide detector please call us on 01935 415202.

Trouble-shooter

If your appliance begins to burn slowly, goes out frequently or if you smell or suspect fumes:

- Open doors and windows.
- Carefully put out the fire, or allow it to burn itself out.
- Do not stay in the room any longer than necessary.
- Do not attempt to re-light the appliance until a professional has checked it.

Electricity

Whenever you become aware of a problem with the electrical system in your home you should ring the Repairs Line on 01935 415202. However, please consider the following before you report a fault;

If the power supply fails in your home and you have just switched on an appliance, unplug the appliance, reset the consumer unit and try again. If you have a complete power failure to your home, you should first check that there is not a distribution failure affecting all the homes in your area.

If the power to sockets and lights work normally afterwards, it may be that your appliance needs to be checked. If you are in any doubt you should have the appliance checked by your own electrician. You are responsible for all light bulbs and fluorescent tubes. Please note: Any defective, unauthorised electrical work carried out by you or on your behalf will be rectified by the Company and recharged to you.

Non emergency / routine repairs

To report non emergency repairs, you can either call the Repairs Line 01935 415202, write to us at Lupin Way, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8WN or go online at our website www.yhg.co.uk.

If you write, please include:

- Your name, address and telephone number. If you are normally at work during the daytime please give your work telephone number and details of the repairs that are required.
- The times when you are usually at home, so that arrangements can be made to inspect the job, if necessary, and get it done.

If you visit or telephone Yarlington Housing Group to report a repair, staff will normally ask you for details of what needs doing, and sometimes it will be necessary for a Maintenance Surveyor to visit you to assess the work that needs

to be done. You will then be told the maximum time you will have to wait until the repairs are completed. Please see the Priority codes which are listed earlier in this section.

Tenants reporting most non emergency repairs will receive a customer receipt card, which will detail the work to be done and will include a customer survey which you may return to us after the job has been finished. Additionally, the Maintenance Surveyors will endeavour to inspect a sample of completed jobs to ensure that all work is done to a satisfactory standard.

Remember that you have “the right to repair”. This gives you a contractual right under the Right to Repair legislation, subject to certain conditions, to arrange your own repairs even though the Company is responsible for them, and to claim payment from the Company.

Problems with repairs

Most repairs are completed within the priority time. However, if the contractor doesn't attend as promised, please contact the repairs team and let them know. Your local Maintenance Surveyor will then do their best to get the work sorted out as soon as possible.

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the repair work, or the attitude of the contractor please tell the repairs team who are there to sort out any problems for you.

When a contractor calls and is unable to enter your home he will leave a reply card. If you receive one of these, you should call the number on the card or return the card as soon as possible to enable us to make alternative arrangements for the repair to be completed. If you do not respond to the card within 10 days the repair request will be cancelled.

Paying for repairs

The Company is only responsible for certain types of repairs, such as deterioration resulting from “fair wear and tear” or leaking tanks, pipes, etc. Full details of repairs for which the Company has responsibility are listed at the beginning of this handbook.

Any damage that occurs to Yarlington Housing Group property must be reported to Yarlington Housing Group. You can ask the Maintenance Surveyor there to organise the repairs - you will be given an estimate of how much the work will cost before ordering it. The cost charged to you will be made up of the cost of the work, the Company’s current administration costs and VAT. You will be sent an invoice for payment of the works being carried out on your behalf. Non-

payment of this invoice may result in court action and your credit rating being affected.

You may organise the work yourself if the Maintenance Surveyor has agreed with what you are proposing to do and who is going to do it. You may be referred to a Senior Maintenance Surveyor, who will have to grant permission for the work to proceed. When the repair is completed it will be inspected to make sure it meets the Company’s quality standard.

The Company does not insure your household contents or your fixtures and fittings. Therefore you are strongly advised to get household insurance cover. (Refer to ‘Home Matters’ handbook)



Planning ahead

Planned Maintenance

Planned maintenance work takes place to bring properties up to the Governments Decent Homes Standard.

As the condition of each property varies the level of work will therefore differ from property to property. This means some

properties will require a significant amount of work while others in the same street may only need a small amount.

The work will be primarily selected based on:

- Meeting the Governments Health & Safety Rating requirements.

- Replacing or repairing one or more key building components (e.g. external walls, roof structure and covering, windows/doors, chimneys, heating systems and electrics) that are both old and because of their condition need replacing or major repair.
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services such as kitchens and bathrooms.
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort such as efficient heating and effective insulation.



Every last detail

We remain committed to improving our properties and upon completion of those improvements we undertake a customer survey and welcome any feedback on the quality of the work carried out.

You will be given plenty of advance warning of any work affecting your home, but if you are planning to do any decorations or improvements and you are unsure of whether to proceed or not please feel free to contact us.

Yarlington Housing Group and its partners have successfully delivered past planned maintenance work to a high standard and together with your help continually seek to improve on this. The principal focus is on the customer.

Should you have any queries regarding the work planned to your home do not hesitate to contact the relevant Yarlington Housing Group Representative.

Home Care and Maintenance

You are responsible for keeping your home in good condition. The following helpful hints are designed to make for a trouble-free tenancy with Yarlington Housing Group.

Heating Systems

Follow the operating instructions in the manufacturer's leaflet and/or on the boiler. If there are no instructions or you are unclear about how the system should be operated, please contact Yarlington Housing Group.

Do we service the heating system?

- All gas heaters and boilers installed and owned by the Company are serviced once a year; see the information regarding breakdowns and repairs, under 'Gas' earlier in this section of the handbook.
- The Company will ensure that all their gas appliances are operating safely and efficiently and that they have sufficient ventilation. These will be serviced every 12 months.
- All solid fuel back boiler appliances are maintained as required and also checked when the property becomes empty.
- Electrical heating is maintained as required.

Do we service the heating system installed by you?

If you are planning to install your own heating system you should first obtain permission from the Company. If you have installed your own heating system and would like the Company to service the installation, please write to Yarlington Housing Group for details. If your heating system or appliances are gas fired they may be included in the Company's Gas Service Contract subject to the following conditions:

- a) that the appliance(s) can be serviced.
- b) you agree to pay for any repairs found.
- c) Yarlington Housing Group will service your appliance but not maintain them.
- d) in the event of you moving out, the appliance(s) should remain in the property. Should they have been found to have been removed then the Company reserves the right to recharge you the cost of replacing the appliance(s).

Solid fuel heating systems

It is very important that the correct fuel, as recommended by the boiler manufacturer, is used on all solid fuel appliances. Please refer to your appliance handbook or contact our repairs line for advice.

Sweep your chimney(s) regularly to avoid blockages and risk of fire.

Laying carpets

Do not stick down carpets as they will be damaged if it is necessary to reach underneath them. If floor coverings need to be moved to allow repairs or maintenance work to be carried out it is the tenant's responsibility to lift and reinstate them. Any damage which occurs during this process is the tenant's own responsibility. We recommend that foam backed carpets are laid on a suitable underlay. When laying carpet with grippers remember that there could be a water pipe beneath the floor where you are about to nail!

Laminate flooring

Yarlington Housing Group do not recommend the installation of laminate flooring but if you wish to install such flooring you must obtain permission first from Yarlington Housing Group.

Please be aware that you will be responsible for the cost of lifting and relaying where access is required for maintenance purposes.

Drilling into walls

The electrical wiring in your home may be hidden in the wall. If you are going to fix something to the wall, never drill anywhere above or below a switch or socket and never drill along a line between two sockets. If your home has surface mounted cables or electrical fittings, do not tamper with these.

Aluminium and UPVC windows

Clean these window frames with a non-abrasive cloth, using a mild soap solution followed by a cold water rinse. Don't paint the frames or fix anything to them with glue, screws or nails, and don't drill holes through them for cables. Many plastic windows are fitted with friction hinges that are designed to keep the window open in the chosen position. Do not oil these hinges.





Portable gas and paraffin heaters

We do not recommend the use of these systems as, contrary to popular belief, these can be the most expensive way to heat your home. However, if you do decide to use them, there are a few words of warning:

- they are dangerous if left unattended when children or pets are around.
- they release a lot of water vapour into the air, which can be especially unhealthy for young children, elderly and sick people. If you have any doubts about the wisdom of using these heaters, please ask your doctor for advice.
- the water vapour causes condensation on walls and in cupboards, allowing mould to grow. This can damage decorations, clothing and furniture as well as softening plaster and rotting timber. Mould spores can be unhealthy for people with certain medical conditions.
- the only way to reduce the condensation is to allow cold air in to ventilate the room which defeats the object of having the heater!

Condensation

Condensation occurs when moist warm air comes into contact with cold surfaces. It can be caused by bathing, laundry, cooking, portable gas & paraffin heaters. You can reduce condensation by providing more ventilation and more heat, and by following these tips:

- When running a bath, put the cold water in first.
- When boiling a lot of water or doing the laundry, open a window.
- When using a tumble dryer, ensure it is ventilated to the outside atmosphere.
- Ensure that there is a means of ventilation in your bedroom.

Wash basins, baths, sinks and WC pans

Do not use abrasive or strong acidic cleaners and don't clean paint brushes in them. Don't flush condoms, sanitary towels, disposable nappies or other bulky non-degradable things down the lavatory, or you may be recharged for blockages caused.

Do not pour substances down sinks, baths or toilets which are likely to cause a blockage, such as hot fat, tea bags/leaves, vegetable peelings etc or you may be recharged.

To preserve the life of the tap washers in your home, please do not over tighten taps when you turn them off.

Pests and rodents

It is important to remember that insects, pests and rodents can be kept to a minimum by making sure you do not allow scraps of food to accumulate in any area of your house or outbuildings. If you have any problems with pests and rodents please contact South Somerset District Council's Environmental Health Pest Control Officer 01935 462462.

Fire Precaution

Most of Yarlington Housing Group properties are fitted with mains operated smoke detectors on each floor. These will need to be tested regularly. When smoke detectors are fitted, training will be given and a manual issued so that you will know how to test them. If you cannot find your manual, or are unsure how to work the system, please contact Yarlington Housing Group who can help you.

Smoke Detectors

If your home is part of a sheltered housing scheme, please contact your Support Co-ordinator or the Community Alarm Call Centre before testing your smoke detectors.

- In all cases, these alarms are 240v mains operated. Do not remove the cover or insert any tool into them.
- Test weekly. Press the test button for at least 10 seconds when testing, the alarm should sound and a red light behind the button flash. If connected to another alarm, both alarms should sound.
- Check regularly to see if the green mains power light is on.
- Keep your smoke alarm clean as they may not work if you allow dust and cobwebs to build up and this can also cause false alarms or prevent smoke entry.
- Do not paint your smoke alarm. Always fix a temporary cover over the alarm when painting the ceiling area close to the alarm - removing when finished.

Fire Drill

It is very important to work out how you could get out of your home if a fire occurs. Make sure your escape route is always kept clear of obstructions like furniture and piles of clothing, and that where doors and windows have locks these are easy to open quickly and keys are readily accessible. If there is a fire escape, make sure that everyone knows about it. Practise the escape and explain it to everyone.

If you do discover a fire, follow this fire drill:

- Get everyone out
- Close all windows and doors as you go
- Raise the alarm and call 999 for the fire brigade
- Do not re-enter the building until it is safe to do so
- Warn your neighbours

Putting you first

Frost Precautions

If there is a severe freeze the Company may be called on to help many tenants. Elderly and vulnerable tenants are normally helped first, so if you need to use the emergency service, please be patient.

By taking some simple precautions you can prevent pipes and tanks bursting during freezing weather and save yourself the damage, disruptions and costly repairs caused by the water.

You should also check the local press for Yarlington Housing Group warnings and announcements.

Things to do now

- Check that all pipes and tanks in the roof are lagged and if you find that they are not, report this to Yarlington Housing Group.
- Find out where the stop tap is, check it for operation; and remember, there might be a separate stop cock in an outbuilding.
- Consider whether you have adequate household contents insurance - Check your insurance policy.
- Contact Yarlington Housing Group if you need any help or advice.

If a severe frost sets in

- Keep your home warm to prevent pipes and tanks freezing.
- Open the trap door to the loft - warm air rises and this warmth will prevent the tank freezing.
- Keep the plug in all sinks and basins.

If the water to your tap freezes

- Turn off the stop tap.
- Shut off water boilers, geysers and immersion heaters.
- Telephone the Repairs Line on 01935 415202.



If you are going away

- Turn off all stop taps [if you live in a flat, check that this will not turn off the water supply to other flats].
- Shut off water boilers, geysers and immersion heaters.
- Turn on all the taps to drain the tanks in the roof - but remember to turn the taps off again.
- Put plugs in all sinks and basins (to prevent the water in the 'U bend' evaporating).
- Flush all lavatories to empty the cisterns.
- When you come back, turn on all hot taps then turn on the stop tap. When water starts to run from the hot taps, turn them off. This will prevent air locks while the tanks and cisterns are filling up.

Alternatively

If you have a central heating system in your home with a room thermostat it is possible to leave the system running on a moderate setting and this may help to reduce the risk.

Returning to your home

- After turning on the main stop tap but before using the heating or hot water systems remember to light the pilot light if the appliance has one.

- After turning on the mains water please ensure that before the immersion heater is switched on, you allow at least 30 minutes for the storage tank(s) and hot water cylinder to fill with water.







RM/0409/GD

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