

PROTECT YOUR PIPES AND WATER SUPPLY DURING COLD WEATHER

Freezing water can cause huge problems for water supply, whether it be in the home or out on the farm. Issues, such as burst pipes and broken taps, not only impact specific households but can also cause water shortages for others in the locality; especially when leaks go undetected.

Your local group water scheme is happy to provide advice where such problems occur but GWS members should realise that responsibility for all pipework and fittings from the boundary box at the watermain to the point of use is solely their responsibility.

Amongst the advised measures you can take are:

- Ensure that your water connection stopcock/meter box is not left exposed to frost damage.
- Protect all exposed pipework, cisterns, tanks, taps and water meters in unheated areas with waterproof foam lagging or insulation.
- Know where the stop-valve is located in case it needs to be turned off in an emergency.
- The main stop-valve is usually found at the point where the pipework enters a premises, while in smaller properties and homes it is often under the kitchen sink. If there is none, have your plumber install one.
- Where possible, keep buildings warm – set central heating on a low heat or a 24-hour constant setting in freezing conditions.
- If premises are going to be left unoccupied for a number of days with no heating, ensure that someone is tasked with checking the property for signs of a burst pipe in the event of freezing conditions. Where very cold weather is forecast, you might consider turning off your water at the stop-tap and draining down your attic tank before leaving.
- In so far as possible, farmers and others relying on a continuous supply should have at least one day's water storage at their premises.
- Farmers should insulate pipes in cattle sheds and consider installing a single valve that will turn off field connections in the vicinity of the farmyard.
- Water to out-farms should be turned off at the individual meter box as soon as cattle are housed for the winter.
- Where you suspect a leak, call a plumber without delay and have it located and fixed.
- Under no circumstances should blow lamps or scalding water be used to defrost meters. Such practice increases the risk of prolonged water loss to your neighbours as well as your own home.

All water conservation efforts help to maintain supply and can reduce energy costs. The National Federation of Group Water Schemes' water saving calculator is a useful tool to help you calculate your own daily household water consumption. It can be found at: www.nfgws.ie/water-saving-calculator/