



ASTER  
GROUP

# pfi repairs handbook

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# About your handbook

**This is your handbook and it gives you information about your repairs service. It tells you what we need to know so we can sort out your repair, what repairs you must do and how to do some of these yourself.**

Get in touch if need the publication in another language, Braille or in large print, on audio tape or CD. Our contact details are in the Getting in touch section on page **3**.

Please call us if English isn't your first language and we will make arrangements to talk to you in your own language.

## **Warning - check identity cards!**

Ask to see our worker's identity card before letting them into your home. Phone our repairs hotline below if you aren't sure about the visitor.

Tel: **0333 400 8266**

## **Before you let us know about your repair**

- Use the advice and pictures in this handbook to find the type of repair you need. By giving us as much information as possible, you can help us to complete the repair more quickly.

## **When you're ready**

- Use the information in our Getting in touch section on page **3** to contact us
- Have this handbook with you when you talk to us and a pen and paper ready to write down any information we give you
- Let us know if you've hearing problems or if you take time to get to the door.

## **Home contents insurance**

It's a good idea to have home contents insurance. This covers you against damage to your personal items like carpets and furniture, including fire or flood damage. It also covers some items if they're stolen and any accidental damage to your home. You're free to find your own insurance or we can give you a leaflet about an insurance scheme if you wish.



# Getting in **touch**

- **Repairs hotline**  
**0333 400 8266**
- **Email**  
**[pfienquiries@aster.co.uk](mailto:pfienquiries@aster.co.uk)** - general enquiries  
**[pfirepairs@aster.co.uk](mailto:pfirepairs@aster.co.uk)** - repairs

(Please don't use email for emergency)

- **Visit or write to us**  
**PFI Team:** Horton Avenue,  
Cannings Hill, Devizes,  
Wiltshire, SN10 2AZ  
**We're open:**  
Monday to Friday **8.30am–5pm**
- **Online form**  
**[www.aster.co.uk](http://www.aster.co.uk)**

# Emergencies - what to do

## Gas (smell, leak or fumes)

- Call the National Gas Emergency Service straight away on **0800 111999**
- Use a phone outside your home. Using one inside, even a mobile, could spark an explosion
- Turn off the gas at the main switch (normally near the gas meter) and open the windows. Turn the handle at the meter to the flat (horizontal) position
- Don't smoke or switch anything electrical on or off until the problem's fixed.

## Electricity

- Turn the mains switch on the fuse box (consumer unit) to OFF
- If you've a power cut, call the emergency number given in your phone book
- Write down the number here:  
.....

## Smoke, fumes or your smoke detector alarm sounds

- Call **999** or **112** immediately if you can smell or see smoke
- If there's no sign of smoke or fire, check whether the alarm's gone off because of something else (see Handy hints on page **47** of the repairs handbook).

## Water

- Turn the mains stoptap to the right (clockwise) to turn the water off. If you have no water supply coming into your home, phone your local water supplier
- Write down the number here:  
.....

**Make a note of where your gas meter, electricity consumer unit and mains water stoptap are.**

See Where is it in my home? on page **54**.

# Your **repairs**

## **When you contact us, let us know**

- Your name, address and phone numbers
- Details of what needs repairing
- If there's anything we should know, like if you have difficulties hearing or you'll take time getting to your door

## **We will log your repair**

- We'll log your repair on our system
- We'll arrange for a repair worker to visit your home and tell you how soon it will be completed.

## **We'll make sure it gets done**

- For urgent and routine repairs, we'll give you a visit date and an appointment slot
- We'll send a letter giving you:
  - The repair order number
  - How soon we'll get out to you for your type of repair and the date it should be finished
  - What repair work will be done
  - The visit appointment once we have agreed one with you.

## **When you tell us about a repair**

- Please don't make your repair problem sound urgent if it isn't, if you do this it could lead to a recharge
- Repair workers work from 8am–5pm. At any other times, including public holidays, we'll send out our repair worker if it's an emergency.

## **When work's going to be done in your home**

- Move any flooring or furniture to allow access to carry out the repair. If you're having problems sorting this out please let us know
- Someone needs to be at home when your repair worker visits your home
- Someone over the age of 18 must be at home during the time that the repair is carried out
- Please don't smoke when the repair worker visits. If you do, they can stop working in your home
- In very bad weather, we'll always make things safe. If more work's needed, we might have to come back another time to finish it
- In some instances, it may not be possible to complete the work at the first visit in which case, we'll agree another appointment date with you
- If you do not allow us access to your home on the agreed appointment date your repair may be cancelled and you may be recharged for the failed visit.

# Who does **what?**

## **What we look after**

**Outside your home:** the building and outside parts of your home, like gutters and roof tiles. We also look after water pipes up to your boundary.

**Inside your home:** water or gas pipes, wiring, heating and hot water systems, drainage, power and light fittings and the fitted kitchen and bathroom. You must look after everything else.

See What you must do on page 9.

**Your garden:** the walls and fences we own. We also look after any paved areas and paths we've put in.

**Shared areas:** we carry out all repairs to these areas.

## **Safety**

We must, by law, do a gas safety check once a year of any gas appliance and pipework we've put in. This work is done by specialist gas repair workers. You must make sure that your own gas appliances are serviced once a year. We also check all smoke detectors we've fitted once a year. If we can, we do both checks together.

You must, by law, let us into your home to do the safety checks. We may go to court to gain formal access if you don't let us in.

You must make sure air vents don't get blocked.





# What you **must** do

## **You must:**

- Decorate the inside of your home well, including filling non-structural holes and cracks in ceiling and walls (including pops and taped joints)
- If you vacate your home, ensure the decoration is in good order and neutral colours, such as magnolia or butter milk
- Tell us as soon as you notice a repair job and try to stop it getting worse
- Look after your fixtures or appliances, like your heating and lighting
- Stop condensation
- Treat mould
- Try to stop blocked pipes and drains and unblock sinks, toilets and drains
- Replace tap washers and toilet seats
- Make sure pipes don't freeze or burst in bad weather
- Repair any damage you or your visitors cause
- Make sure a fire doesn't happen in your home
- Get new keys or put on new door locks when keys are lost or broken, or when you get locked out
- Adjust and tighten cupboard door hinges
- Fit chains or any extra locks
- Make changes to doors when you have new carpets
- Put up curtain rails
- Put in new light bulbs and fluorescent tubes, including shaver lights
- Put trip switches back on
- Maintain TV aerials and associated equipment (unless it's a shared communal aerial)
- Maintain telephone outlets
- Test and clean any smoke or carbon monoxide detectors we've put in
- Keep fan and window vents clear
- Tighten up loose handles on doors and kitchen units
- Replace batteries in any smoke or carbon monoxide detectors

- Replacement of electrical fittings and any electrical repairs arising from the faulty appliances. You are responsible for maintaining your own electrical appliances
- Clean the inside of windows including frames
- Try to clear blocked sinks, baths, toilets and shower trays
- Get new plugs and chains for baths and sinks
- Replace and fix shower curtains and shower rails
- Clean and get rid of scale from your shower head and hoses
- Fit wastes and pipework for dishwashers, washing machines and vents for tumble driers, if they're not already there
- Put up new or maintain existing clothes lines or rotary driers including bases (unless in shared communal areas)
- Look after any garden paths, private parking areas (including carports), fences and other garden items like decking that you've put in yourself
- Get rid of leaves and rubbish in drainage gully grids
- Maintain grass and landscaped areas within your garden

- Maintain any locks, latches or the like that are fitted to garden gates or fences
- Maintain and adjust any gate.

### **If you can't complete a repair**

Get in touch if you are unable to carry out a repair on your own as we may be able to help you.

### **Damage & costs**

If you or anyone in your home, including visitors or pets, cause damage to your home, you must get it repaired properly. If we have to do the repair to make sure you and your family are safe, you'll have to pay for this.

### **Changes you've made**

You can make changes to your home but we must agree in writing first. You must look after any repairs to these changes. You may also be asked to reverse these changes at the end of your tenancy. See Changes to make your home better in your customer handbook.

# How long **it takes**

When you tell us about your repair, we'll tell you how soon we'll do it. This will be taken from the date you contact us. You can see on page **53** how quickly we deal with different kinds of repairs.

**Emergency rectification:** we aim to get someone to your home as soon as possible and to make everything safe within 24 hours.

These repairs take away danger or stop serious damage to your home, like burst water pipes, no water supply, making the property secure, or in some cases providing temporary heating.

You can call us about emergencies at any time of day or night, but if our worker calls and no-one's home, or if it's not a genuine emergency we'll charge you for this.

**Urgent rectification:** we'll finish the work within five working days. This is for work to stop damage to your home or stop serious problems like health, safety or security.

**Routine rectification:** we'll finish the work within 20 working days (40 working days if your home is classed as temporary accommodation). This is for work where the problem isn't dangerous.

**Exceptions:** there may be times when it may not be possible to complete the work at the first visit or within the agreed timescales. In such cases we'll agree a completion date with you.

We may group repairs together to create a batch of repair jobs. This means we can minimise the disturbance for everyone in the area and make best use of the money we spend.

Please arrange to be home, or for a friend or relative over the age of 16 to be available to give our workers access to your home. Let us know straight away if you will not be at home at the time of your repair appointment so that we can rearrange the repair.

Our people will leave a calling card asking you to contact us if you are not in when they visit. We will cancel your repair if you do not contact us within 10 days of the appointment.

# What you can **expect from us**

## **Our repair workers will:**

- Give you respect and always behave professionally
- Say who they are and show you their identity card before coming in
- Tell you what they're going to do and what this will mean for you
- Protect things in your home from damage, dust and paint
- Make sure what they're working with isn't dangerous
- Clear their rubbish from your home and make sure electricity, water and gas are put back on after the work's been done
- Close doors and gates when they leave
- Explain how any new things they've put in work
- Agree with you the next course of action when a further visit is required.

## **Repair workers will not:**

- Smoke in or around your home
- Play radios in or around your home without your permission and if you do let them, keep the volume at an acceptable level
- Use mobile phones for personal calls
- Be in your home with children if there's no adult there (an adult is anyone over 16)
- Take money, services or gifts from you as a thank you for work
- Keep keys to your home
- Take their lunch break in your home
- Use bad language.

## **And they must ask you if they can:**

- Use your phone
- Use your toilet
- Go into other rooms in your home.

## **What kind of service do we give?**

We'll listen and deal with repairs in an efficient and helpful way. Most repairs are done by Aster, but we sometimes use other workers.

Please let us know straight away if you're not happy with anything we've done.

If you're still not happy and want to complain, refer to the Complaints section in your customer handbook.

## **Do we check on the quality of work?**

Once a repair has been complete you will have the opportunity to undertake a customer satisfaction survey. If you would like to be surveyed and provide some feedback please contact us as per page **3**. We and our repair partner do undertake some random checks to make sure that work is done well.

**We want to make  
our services better.**

**Please let us know if you've any  
comments, compliments or complaints.**

# Baths & basins

## What you must do

- Try to clear blocked baths, basins, sinks and shower trays
- Maintain and replace shower curtains and shower curtain rails
- Repair anything you've put in yourself
- Get new plugs and chains for baths, basins and sinks
- Clean and get rid of scale from baths, sinks, shower heads and hoses
- Clean wastepipes and drains from time to time to stop them getting blocked
- Maintain towel rails, mirrors and toilet roll holders
- Contain leaks where possible.

## Advice

- For water leaks or tap problems, see Pipes and taps on page **33** and Drains and wastes on page **19**

- A blocked wastepipe isn't an emergency. You must try to clear it yourself before you call us. See Handy hints on page **43**. We'll charge you for clearing blockages caused by things like toys or hair
- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you
- If we need to put in new bathroom items which are part of a matching set, they'll always be in white, including any tiles.

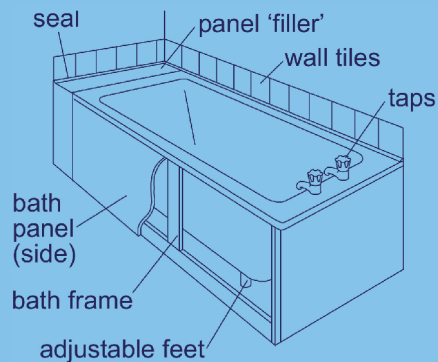
## We need to know

- What the problem is, like: basin loose or broken, wastepipe leaking or blocked, wall tiles cracked or broken?
- If a panel, is it at the side or end? Is it made of plastic or plywood?
- If a bath, is it plastic or metal?
- What colour is it?

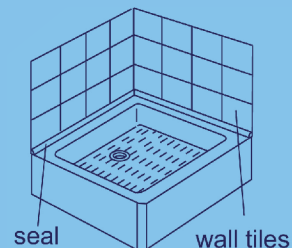


- If a sink top, does it have an inset top or does the metal cover the whole top?
- If tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?

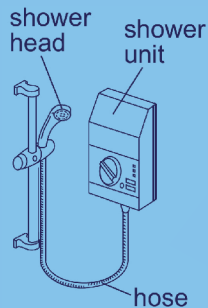
## Bath



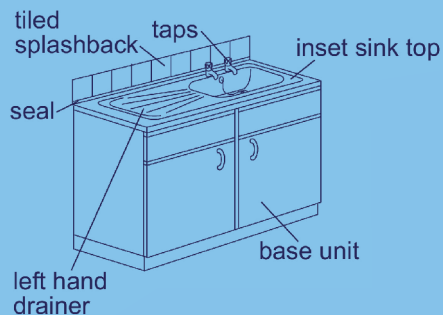
## Shower tray



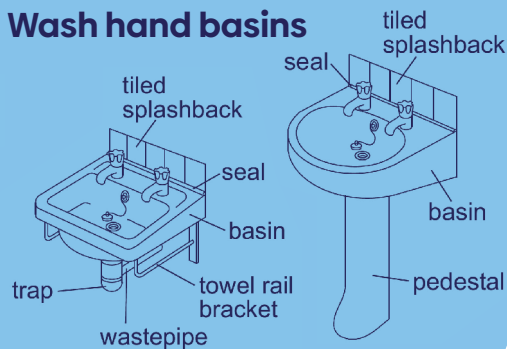
## Electric shower



## Sink & drainer



## Wash hand basins



# Doors & locks

## What you must do

- Get new keys or put on new locks when keys are lost or broken, or when you get locked out
- Fit chains or any extra locks.  
See Advice below
- Make changes to doors, for example when you have new carpets or flooring
- Ease and adjust internal doors including locks and handles
- Lubricate external locks and hinges.

## Advice

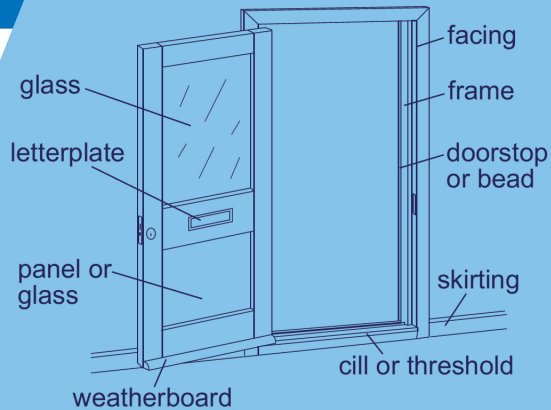
- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you
- If you're worried about the security of your home, let us know. In some cases we may be able to put on extra locks

- If someone's broken in and damaged anything, you should let the police know and get a crime reference number.

## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: lock stiff, lock or handle broken, door sticking, not closing properly or damaged?
- Which door is it: front, back or side?
- Is it a shared entrance?  
What type of lock or latch has it got?  
Can you still lock the door?
- What is it made of: wood, plastic (UPVC)?
- If glass, what type is it: plain, frosted or wired? Is it double-glazed?
- What type of lock it is: mortice, cylinder mortice, rim lock, multi-point or cylinder rim nightlatch (Yale or Union)?

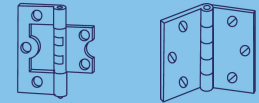
## Door & frame



## Multi-point lock (Espagnolette)

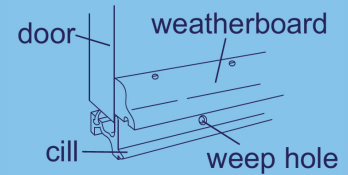


## Door hinges

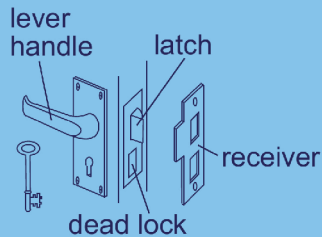


flush hinge butt hinge

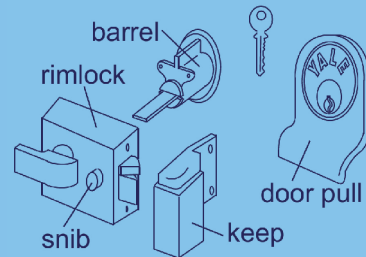
## Stormguard cill



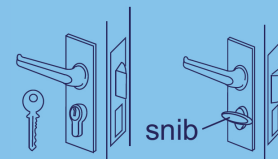
## Mortice latch



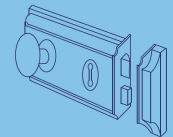
## Cylinder rim nightlatch (Yale/union)



## Cylinder mortice lock (Snib inside)



## Rim lock



# Drains & waste

## What you must do

- Try to clear blocked baths, basins, sinks, toilets or shower trays
- Clear blockages or repair leaks from washing machines or dishwashers
- Keep drainage gully grids clean and get rid of leaves and rubbish
- Clean wastepipes and drains from time to time to stop them getting blocked.

## Advice

- A blocked wastepipe isn't an emergency repair. You must try to clear it yourself before calling us. See Handy hints on page **43**
- A blocked toilet is only an emergency if you have no other toilet
- Keep your wastepipes and drains clear by flushing them from time to time with hot water

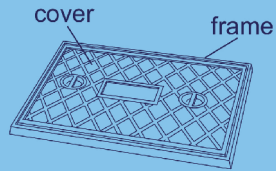
- On occasions, use the toilet to double flush water. See Handy hints on page **43**
- Don't pour fat or oil down sinks, toilets or outside drains
- The cost of repairing a blockage caused by things like nappies, air fresheners, condoms or tampons will be met by you.

## We need to know

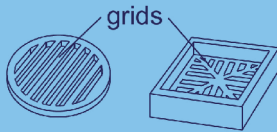
- What the problem is, such as: wastepipe or trap blocked or leaking, drain smelling or blocked, gully blocked or grid missing?
- Whether you have attempted to unblock it
- If a wastepipe, which is it: bath, basin, sink, shower or toilet?
- If a wastepipe is blocked: is more than one fitting blocked, or if you live in a flat, are any other flats having a problem?

- If the drain is blocked: is it overflowing?
- If a drainage gully grid, is it round or square?
- What's it made of: metal or plastic?

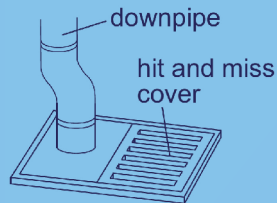
## Drain inspection chamber



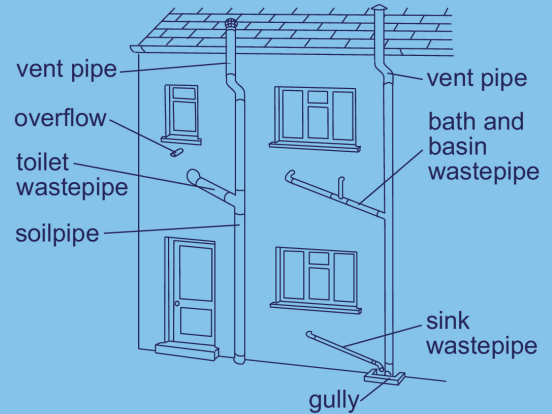
## Drainage gully grids



## Back inlet drainage gully



## Two-pipe system



## 'S' trap



## 'P' trap



## Bottle trap



# Electrics

## What you must do

- Put trip switches back on and turn off your electricity if you need to. See Handy hints on page **45**
- Put in new light bulbs and fluorescent tubes, including shaver lights
- Put in and maintain additional TV aerial sockets and apparatus
- Test and clean any smoke or carbon monoxide detectors we've put in. See Handy hints on page **47**
- Regularly replace any batteries in smoke or carbon monoxide detectors.

## Advice

- Don't touch bare wires
- Don't touch sockets or switches with wet hands. Also, if water is leaking onto anything electrical or any electrical fitting, don't use or touch any switches connected to it. Let us know straight away

- Make sure you know where the trip switches are and you know how to put them on and off. See Handy hints on page **45**
- Don't take off, change or add any electrical fitting without our permission
- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you.

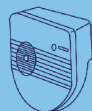
## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: no lights or power in part of, or the whole property; light or sight switch isn't working, socket loose or broken?
- Are other homes having the same problem?
- What type of fitting or socket is it?
- Has it caused any other problems to you or others?
- When you last replaced the batteries in the smoke or carbon monoxide detectors.

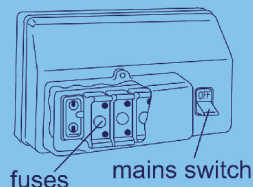
## Smoke detector



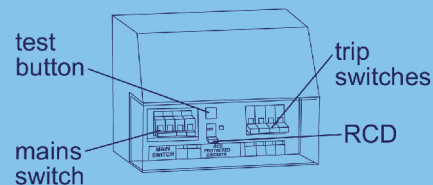
## Extractor fan



## Fuse box



## Consumer unit

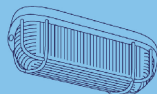


## Light with closed cover

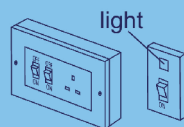


## Pendant lampholder Ceiling switch

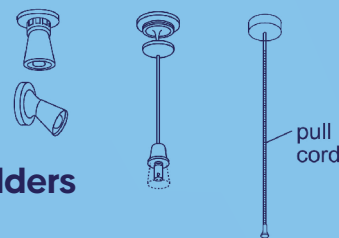
## Bulkhead light



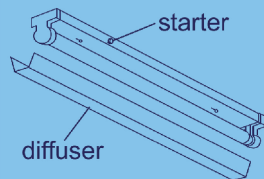
## Cooker control units



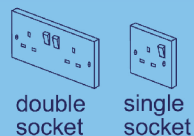
## Batten lampholders



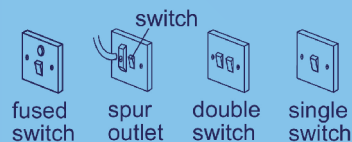
## Fluorescent strip light



## Sockets



## Switches



# Floors & stairs

## What you must do

- Look after any floor covering you've put down
- Take care of the vinyl flooring or vinyl tiles we have put down.

## Advice

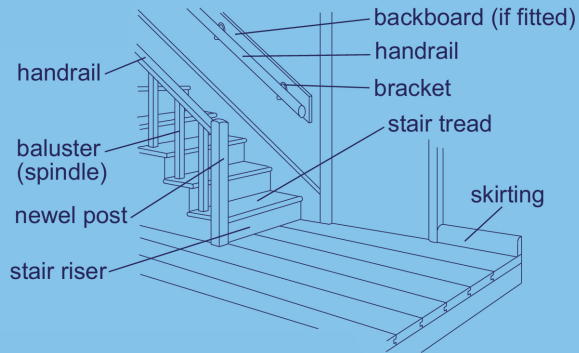
- You must pay for any damage to your floor covering
- We'll put down dust sheets so your furniture and carpets don't get dirty when we work. If we say you need to lift your floor covering, you should do this before the repair worker arrives
- If you put carpets down, it's a good idea to use gripper rods. This makes it easier for you to lift them for repairs
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet damage anything and we have to repair it, you'll have to pay for this.

## We need to know

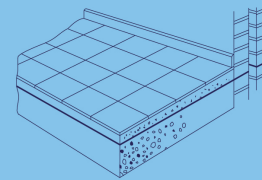
- What the problem is: floorboard loose or damaged, tread or riser broken, handrail loose or broken, floor covering lifting or damaged?
- What is the floor made of: floorboards, chipboard or concrete?
- What type of floor covering is it, for example: quarry tiles (what colour?), vinyl tiles or sheeting, or slip-resistant flooring? Is it in a shared area?
- How many boards, panels or tiles need to be looked at?



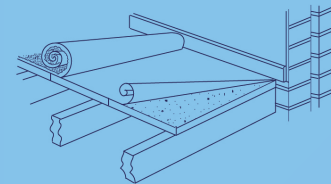
## Balustrade



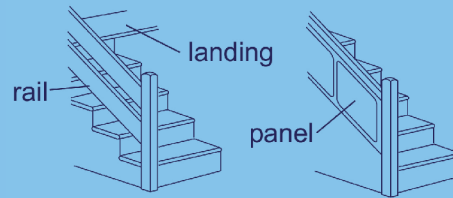
## Solid floor (Concrete)



## Floor (Chipboard)

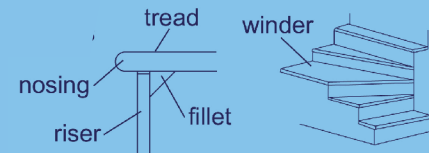


## Stairs & wooden floor



## Types of stairs

## Step details



# Gardens

## What you must do

- Maintain sheds within the boundary of your garden
- Maintain any fences
- Maintain any gate latches
- Maintain any water butts and compost bins
- Look after any garden paths not put in by us and other garden items like decking, unless they're in shared areas
- Put up new or maintain existing clothes lines or rotary driers including bases, unless in a shared area
- Maintain landscaped areas, unless in a shared area
- Replace bulbs in outside lighting
- Deter any pests such as rodents
- Maintain lawns including reseeding if required
- Maintain trees and shrub either in or hanging over you garden

- Regularly clear up any animal faeces (otherwise this will prevent us from safely undertaking works outside).

## Advice

- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you. If criminal damage has occurred, contact the police to get a crime reference number
- Don't grow anything near or next to your outside walls. This can cause problems with the brickwork and make it damp.

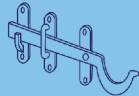
## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: path uneven or cracked?
- If a path, which path is it?
- What's it made of, for example: slabs, concrete or Tarmac?

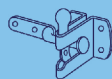
## Gate catches



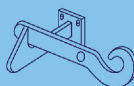
hand latch



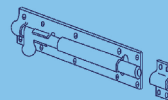
automatic latch



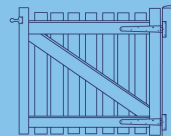
sneck



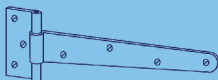
## Barrel bolt



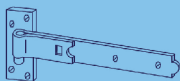
## Wooden gate



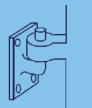
## Hinges



'T' hinge



hook and band hinge



hook hinge

## Knee rail

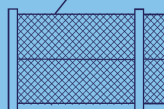


## Metal gate



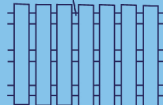
## Chain link

straining wire

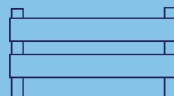


## Palisade

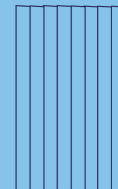
arris rail



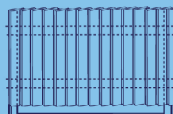
## Ranch style



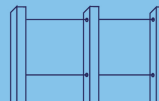
## Privacy panel



## Close boarded



## Post & wire



# Gutters

## What you must do

- Clear all rubbish and leaves from your drainage gully grids.

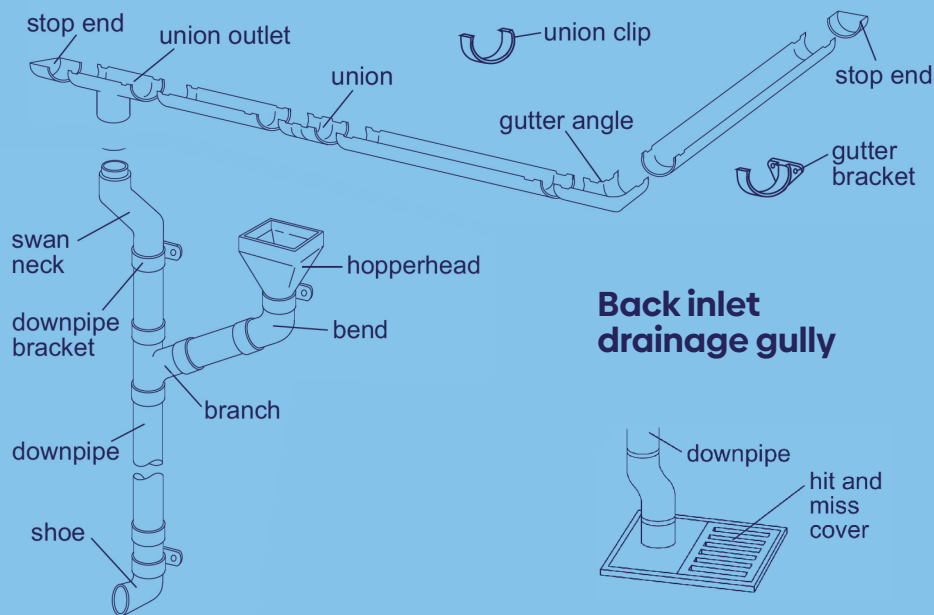
## Advice

- If you notice leaves in your gutters, please report this to us once the leaf fall is over (Autumn and early Winter)
- We need to put up scaffolding for some repairs
- In bad weather, repair workers can't work high up on ladders, scaffolding or on the roof because it's not safe
- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you.

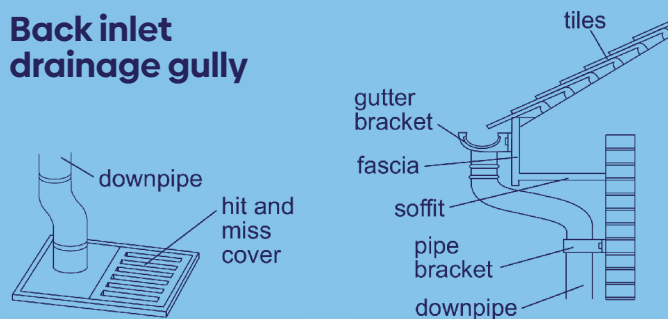
## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: gutter or downpipe loose, leaking or blocked; bracket, joint or shoe loose or broken?
- Which gutter or downpipe it is: front, back or side?
- What shape is the gutter: half-round, deep-flow or square? What colour is it?
- If a drainage gully grid: is it round or square? What is it made of: metal or plastic?
- How many floors does your building have?
- What is the gutter or downpipe made of: metal, plastic or concrete?
- Has it caused any other problems?
- Are any other homes having the same problem?

## Gutters



## Back inlet drainage gully



## Drainage gully grids



## Gutter profiles



# Heating

## What you must do

- If you smell gas, contact National Gas Emergency Service immediately on **0800 111999**. See Emergencies on page 4
- Get your own things like heaters and cookers looked after by trained engineers
- Keep your home properly heated to stop pipes from freezing or bursting in cold weather
- Let in fresh air to try to stop condensation
- Change any batteries in the thermostat unit
- Test your heating in later summer ahead of use in Autumn
- Bleed radiators
- Familiarise yourself with the boiler operational manual
- Contain leaks where possible
- Take care of any temporary heaters provided by us, use them safely and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Advice

- If a radiator's leaking or loose because you've been decorating, you'll have to pay for this
- If we aren't able to repair your heating when we arrived we will ensure you have a means of continuing to heat your home
- If we provide a temporary heater this will be gifted unless advised otherwise
- Please ensure any temporary heaters that you have been gifted are stored safely for reuse
- You are responsible for the cost of running temporary heaters.

## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: central heating not working, no hot water, radiator leaking or not getting warm, fire or heater not working?
- What type of heating it is: gas, electric, oil or solid fuel?
- Does it have a boiler?
- If electric, is it a storage, convector, panel or a fan heater?

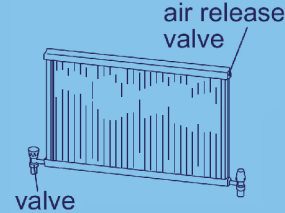
## Wall mounted central heating boiler (Gas or electric)



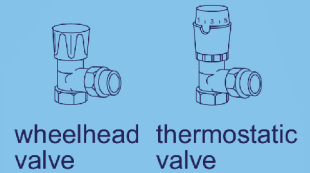
## Mains gas handle



## Radiator



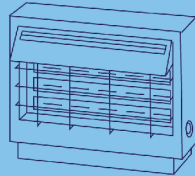
## Radiator valves



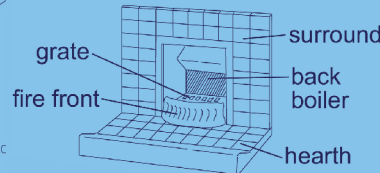
## Closed fire (with back boiler)



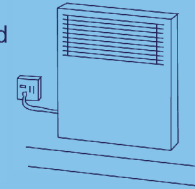
## Gas fire



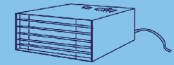
## Open fire



## Panel heater

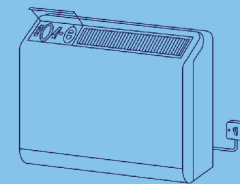


## Bathroom fan heater

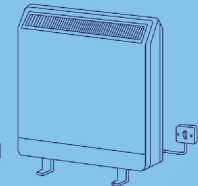


- Do you have any other heating or ways to heat your hot water, like an electric immersion heater or solar panels?
- If a radiator: is it warm at the bottom and cold at the top?
- What the fault code is displaying on the boiler?
- What the boiler pressure gauge is showing?
- When you last replaced the batteries in the thermostat?

## Convector heater



## Storage heater



# Kitchens

## What you must do

- Put in your own washing machine, dishwasher or tumble drier and any wastes, pipes and vents if they're not already there. See Advice below
- Clear your washing machine or dishwasher if it's blocked
- Unblock sinks
- Repair kitchen cupboards you've put in
- Tighten up loose handles on kitchen cupboards
- Adjust and tighten cupboard door hinges and drawers fronts
- Maintain and replace cupboard door locks and keys
- Refit foot/kickboards.

## Advice

- If we have to put in new kitchen cupboards or other things like a worktop, drawer or door, we'll try to match the colour if we can

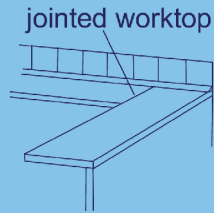
- If you put in a washing machine, dishwasher or tumble drier, you must look after any water supply, waste or vent connections that you've fitted to them
- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you.

## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as:  
wall or floor cupboard loose or broken,  
worktop loose or broken, cupboard door or drawer broken, cupboard hinge or catch broken?
- What type of cupboard is it:  
wall or floor?  
Is it a tall one or a corner cupboard?  
Is it a single or a double cupboard?
- If wall tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?
- If a worktop, how are the pieces joined:  
with a joint strip or mitred?
- If a door hinge, does it open right back against the cupboard or only half way?



## Worktops



## Door knob



## 'D' handle



## Hinges



flush hinge

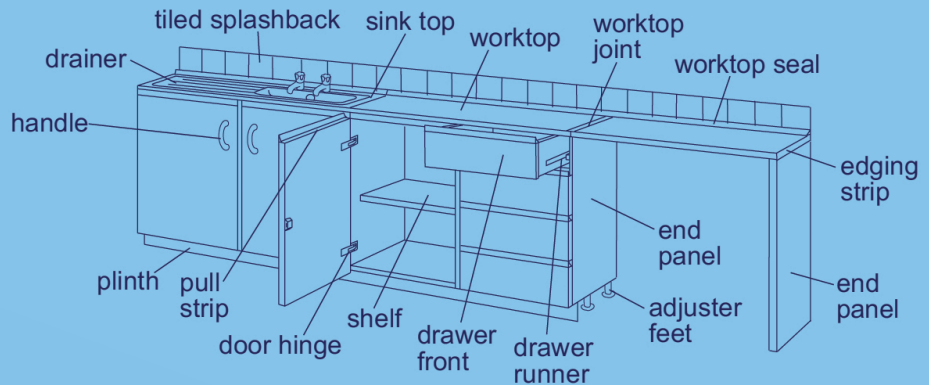


butt hinge



concealed hinge

## Kitchen units



# Pipes

## What you must do

- Make sure pipes don't freeze or burst in cold weather, especially if you're away from home. See Advice below
- Fit all pipes for your dishwasher, if they're not already there
- Where possible contain any leaks that occur
- Isolate the outside tap to prevent it freezing.

## Advice

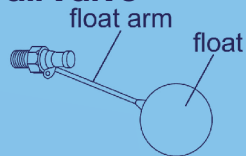
- You should know where your stop tap is so you can turn the water off in an emergency
- If water's leaking onto anything electrical, don't touch it. Turn off the electricity at your consumer unit (fuse board). See Handy hints on page **45**
- If water leaks from your washing machine or dishwasher, we'll charge you for repairing any damage. You may be able to get this money back on your home contents insurance. See Home contents insurance on page **2**

- If you're away from home and the weather's cold, you should leave your heating on low or drain down the water and heating system. This stops water freezing in pipes. If you need help, let us know
- When a leak does occur it is possible to isolate taps locally
- An insulated tap cover can be purchased from DIY stores, to protect the outside tap from freezing. Draining the water from the tap and pipe work will help reduce this.

## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: no water, hot water coming out cold, pipe leaking or burst, overflow running, tap dripping?
- If water is leaking into your property: is it coming from the flat above? What's the address?
- Are there any other problems?
- If no water: do your neighbours have water or not?

### Ball valve



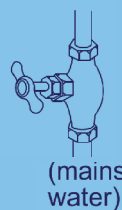
### Drain tap (Drain valve)



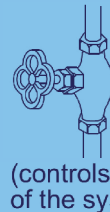
### Isolation valve



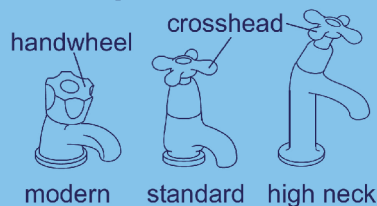
### Stoptap



### Gate valve



### Pillar taps



### Mixer tap



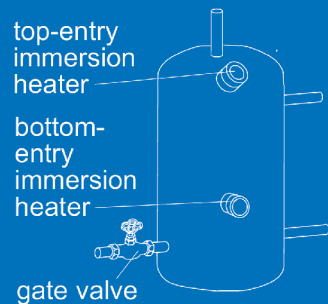
### Bib tap



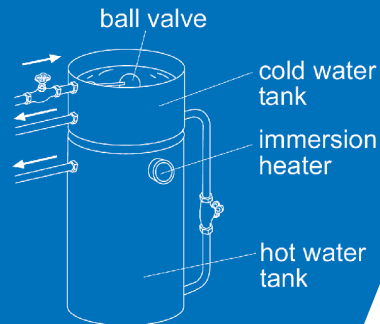
### Lever tap



### Hot water cylinder



### Combination tank



# Roofs

## What you must do

- Look after any aerial or satellite dish unless it's one of our shared ones.

## Advice

- We may need to put up scaffolding but when the weather's bad, repair workers can't work high up
- If anything electrical's getting wet because the roof's leaking, don't use any of these switches and let us know straight away
- If you want to put up an aerial or satellite dish we must agree in writing first. You might need to get permission from your local council too
- If your TV aerial or satellite dish is preventing us from completing our work, we may ask you to remove it temporarily. If we have to move it we may charge you.

## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: roof leaking; tiles or slates loose or broken, chimney pot fallen or loose, chimney stack crumbling? (We only expect you to tell us about what you can see from the ground)
- What type of roof covering is it, for example: slate tiles, corrugated sheeting, flat felting, asphalt or fibreglass fitted covering?
- If tiles, what type are they? Flat, ridge, interlocking, hip or verge. What colour are they?
- How many floors does your home have?
- Is that chimney shared with another home? What's the address?

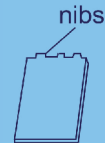
## Natural slate



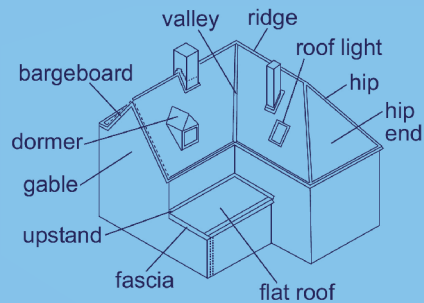
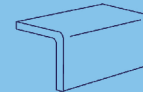
## Interlocking tile



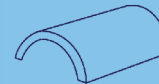
## Plain tile



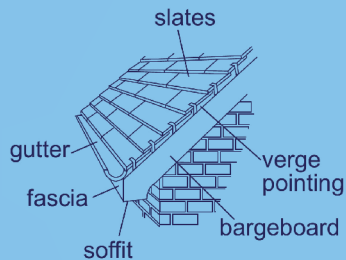
## Cloaked verge tile



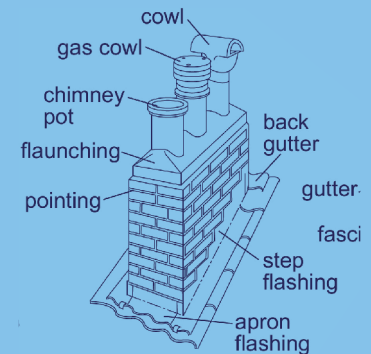
## Half round ridge tile



## Hip tiles



## Chimney stack



# Toilets

## What you must do

- Try to clear blocked toilets. See Handy hints on page **43**
- Maintain and replace toilet seats
- Wipe condensation away from systems regularly to avoid it appearing like a leak, or causing damage to surrounding finishes.

## Advice

- A blocked toilet is only an emergency repair if you've no other toilet
- If your cistern doesn't flush, this isn't an emergency. You should pour water into it until it's fixed
- The cost of repairing a blockage caused by things like nappies, air fresheners, condoms or tampons will be met by you

- Please clean and clear your toilet from time to time using cleaning products. Always do what it says on the label
- If we put in a new toilet which is part of a matching set, it'll always be white.

## We need to know

- What the problem is, like: toilet blocked, overflow running, cistern leaking, pan cracked or leaking, flush handle or chain broken?
- What type of cistern is it: high-level or low-level? If low-level, is it a flush panel, close-coupled or standard type? Does it have an overflow pipe?
- What type of handle is it: lever handle, push down knob or chain?
- What colour is the toilet or cistern?
- If your toilet's blocked and you live in a block of flats, are any other flats having problems?

## Low-level cisterns



standard

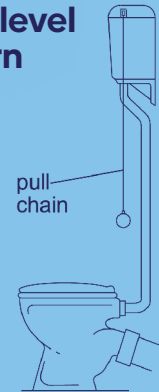


flush panel

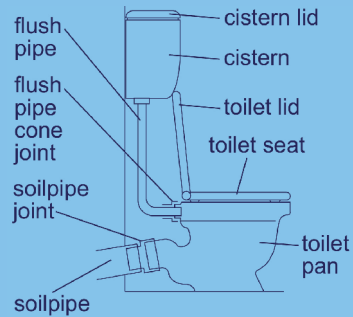


close-coupled

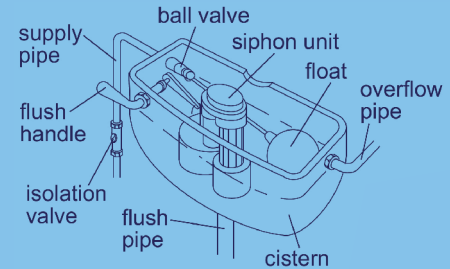
## High-level cistern



## Toilets



## Toilet cistern



# Walls & ceilings

## What you must do

- Decorate the inside of your home well, including filling non-structural holes and cracks in ceiling and walls (including pops and taped joints- minor plasterworks)
- Deal with condensation as this can turn into damp or mould
- Keep air vents and extractor fan vents clear.

## Advice

- If you fix things to the wall you must take care not to damage pipes and cables beneath
- If you fix things to the wall, you must take them down and fill in all the holes if you move out
- If you want to put a satellite dish on your outside wall, you must get our agreement in writing first. You might need to get your local council to agree too

- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you
- Don't grow anything near or next to our outside walls. This can cause problems with the brickwork and make it damp.

## We need to know

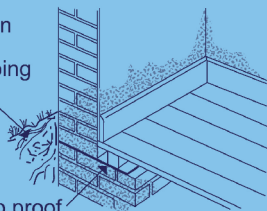
- What the problem is, such as: plaster loose, crumbling or bulging; condensation or mould on walls or ceiling; outside cladding falling off?
- Is there any damage caused by water leaking?
- If an inside wall, what is it made of: plasterboard or brick?
- If an outside wall, what is it made of: brick, tiling or concrete blocks and does it have a covering? If so, what type is it: rough cast, cladding boards or timberboards?



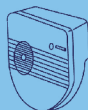
## Damp / mould

dampness can happen because of earth going over the damp proof course

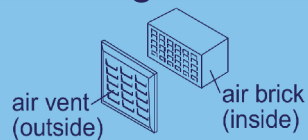
damp proof course



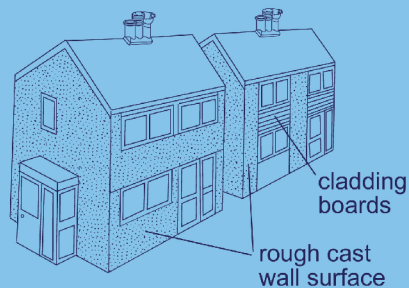
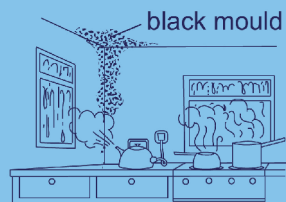
## Extractor fan



## Air flowing



## Water & mould



# Windows

## What you must do

- Keep window trickle vents clear and use them to stop condensation
- Ease and adjust windows including locks and handles
- Lubricate hinges and locks
- Replace broken or cracked glass
- Deal with condensation to prevent it causing damp and mould.

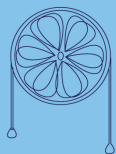
## Advice

- Do not slam windows as this will cause the double glazing to fail or crack
- If there's been vandalism or a break-in, you'll have to claim on your household insurance
- The cost of repairs of damage caused by you, a member of your family, visitor or a pet will be met by you.

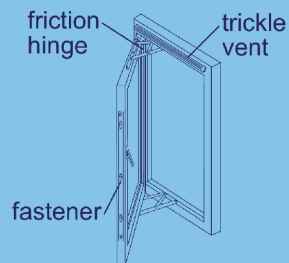
## We need to know

- What the problem is, such as: glass cracked or broken, frame loose or jammed, stay or fastener broken?
- What type of frame is it: wooden or plastic (UPVC)?
- What style of window is it: casement, sliding sash, pivot or top-hung?
- If glass, what type is it, for example: plain or frosted? Is it double-glazed?
- If a fastener, what type is it, for example: multi-point, casement or other type?
- If a child restrictor, where is it: on the bottom of the frame, the side of the frame, or on the window itself?
- Has it caused any other problems?

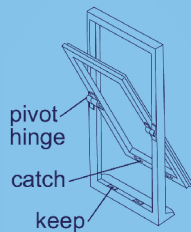
## Window vent



## UPVC window (with casement or multi-point fastener)



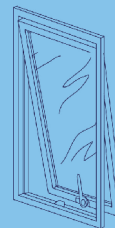
## Pivot window



## Sliding sash



## Top-hung

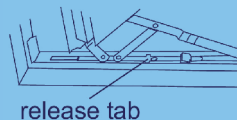


## Lockable UPVC handle

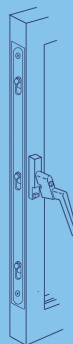


## Casement fastener

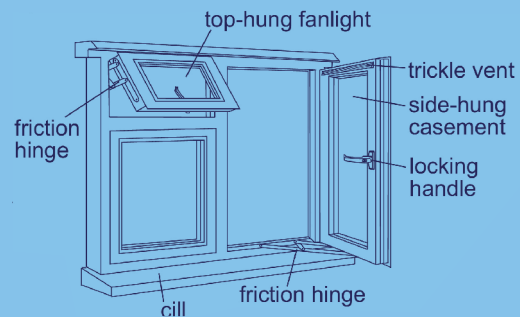
## Child restrictor



## Multi-point fastener



## Casement window



# Clearing a **blocked waste fitting**

## **General advice**

- Blocked basins and sinks are usually caused by waste in the trap: fat, tea leaves, hair, cooking oil etc
- If water is slow draining away, we advise you to clear wastepipes and traps with a cleaning product. Always follow the instructions carefully. Don't use caustic soda because it breaks down the plastic of the pipes
- The trap always holds water which stops smells coming up the drain but waste can build up in the trap and become stuck
- If you notice that waste pipes are running slowly, try using an off the shelf-product to unblock them as a precautionary measure
- If more than one fitting (bath, basin, sink or shower) is blocked, the blockage may be in the soil stack or main drain. This will need to be cleared by us

- Blocked toilets are usually caused by unusual objects: nappies, toys or toilet fresheners. You must not use toilets to get rid of rubbish
- The cost of repairing any blockage will be met by you.

## **What to do**

You need:

- Bowl or bucket
- Jug or cup to be used as a scoop
- Cloth
- Plunger - for the toilet you can use a toilet brush
- Rubber gloves.

To unblock a bath, basin or sink:

- Scoop out most of the water
- Hold the cloth tightly over the overflow opening

- Put the plunger over the plug hole and pump it up and down quickly.

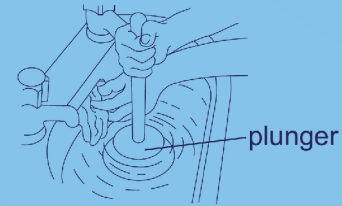
To unblock a toilet:

- If the pan is already full, take out some water using a scoop, for example a jug or cup and put it into a bucket
- Push the brush or plunger to the bottom of the pan
- Pump it up and down quickly about 10 times. This should shift the blockage
- Flush the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone.

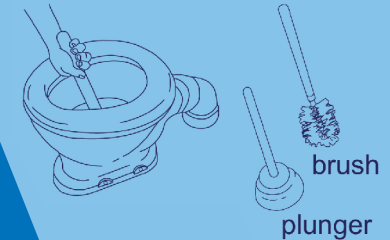
You may need to do this more than once before the toilet flushes normally. If you still have problems, you should contact us. If we have to clear a blockage caused by misuse we may charge you for it.

After you've finished, wash your hands and everything you've used.

## Unblocking a basin or sink



## Unblocking a toilet



## 'P'trap



## Bottle trap



# Resetting a **trip switch**

If your lights or power go off, it means your trip switches are working properly.

You can find out what caused the problem and sort it out quite easily.

## **General advice**

- Modern electric circuits are fitted with circuit breakers called trip switches. If there's a problem with your electrics, a switch is tripped and the circuit is broken
- All fuses or trip switches are located in the consumer unit or fuse box. Some consumer units have buttons rather than switches
- A trip switch or button usually operates because:
  - There are too many appliances on a circuit and it's overloaded
  - An appliance is faulty or hasn't been used properly, for example, a kettle has been over-filled or toaster not cleaned
  - Water has leaked into a circuit or spilt onto a plug
  - A light bulb has blown
  - There's a problem with your immersion heater
- Always have a torch handy if you have a power cut
- If there's a problem with one of your electrical appliances, leave it unplugged and get a qualified electrician or service engineer to check it
- If there's a problem with your wall or ceiling light, keep it switched off (put some tape over the switch) and let us know straight away
- Make sure your hands are dry when you touch electrical fittings.

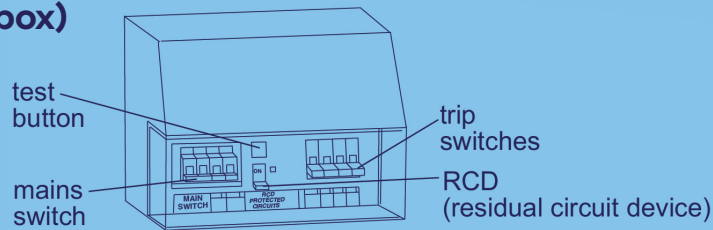
To reset a trip:  
(This advice is only for modern consumer units. If you've an older 'fuse box' type with rewirable cartridges, don't touch it and contact us immediately.)

- Open the cover on the consumer unit so that you can get to the trip switches/buttons
- Check which switches/buttons have tripped to the OFF position and which rooms (circuits) have problems
- Put these switches/buttons to the ON position.

If the trip goes again, it's probably being caused by a problem with one of your appliances or lights. You need to find out which circuit it is and which appliance on that circuit is causing the problem:

- Check all the rooms and check which set of lights or sockets isn't working
- Unplug all appliances on that problem circuit, and switch off the immersion heater
- Switch the 'tripped' switch to the ON position (press in if it's a button)
- Plug in the appliances or switch on each light, one at a time, until the trip goes again. Don't use adaptors or multi-plug extensions when testing appliances.

## Consumer unit (or fuse box)



# About your **smoke detector**

The smoke detector in your home is connected to the main electricity wiring.

We'll come and do a safety check once a year. You are responsible for the testing of the detectors.

## **If the alarm goes off**

- Take your family to where it's easy to escape in case there's a fire
- Check all rooms for signs of smoke
- Feel around each door before opening it
- If there's any sign of heat, smoke or noise, don't open the door.

## **If a fire has broken out**

- Don't try to put it out yourself. Smoke and fumes can kill in minutes
- Get everyone out of the house and call the fire service (**999** or **112**) unless you live in a scheme where there is a 'stay put' procedure

- Don't go back in for any reason.

## **If there's no sign of smoke or fire**

Something may have made the alarm go off by mistake and you may need to reset it. This can happen if:

- A heater or clothes drier is too near it
- Someone smokes a cigarette or pipe near it or a spray is used near it
- There's too much steam or fumes from cooking, roasting meat or burnt toast
- There are strong draughts from nearby doors or windows
- Some insects have flown close to it
- The back-up batteries (if any) are low, so please replace in both alarms. If we are called to replace the batteries we will charge you for this.

If you can't find out why it's gone off, contact the repairs hotline.

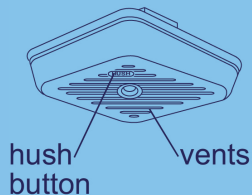


Never disconnect the alarm. This will put you and your family at risk.

### To reset the alarm

- If it has a HUSH button, press the button
- The alarm will stop for 10 seconds, but it then beeps every 40 seconds. If the problem doesn't clear after 10 minutes, the alarm will keep going
- If there's no HUSH button, turn off the electricity supply at the consumer unit for at least 15 minutes. Then switch the electricity back on

## Smoke detectors



### To test your alarm

- Press and hold the test button for a few seconds. The alarm should sound
- If the alarm doesn't sound, try cleaning it and test again
- If the alarm still doesn't sound, contact the repairs hotline.

### To clean your alarm

- Use the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner to get rid of any dust from the vents.



# Preventing **burst pipes**

## **General Advice**

- Find out where the mains stoptap is and write it down on page **54** of this book
- Know where the gate valves for the hot and cold water tanks are. They are usually by the hot water and cold water tanks
- Make sure you can easily turn all the stoptaps and valves. If they're stiff, try applying some WD40 or oil to loosen them following the manufacturer's instructions. If you're unsuccessful, don't force the tap but contact us
- In very cold weather, you should take action to prevent a freeze up. If you can it's a good idea to leave the heating on all the time on a very low heat

- In very cold weather you must isolate the outside tap to prevent it freezing.

## **What to do**

If you're going away for several weeks

- You should turn off your water supply at the stoptap, turn off your heating or hot water system and turn off your gas supply at the mains. You should also let us know who to contact if there's a problem while you're away
- But, if you go away during cold weather, it's best to leave everything on and set the heating for an hour each evening on a low temperature.

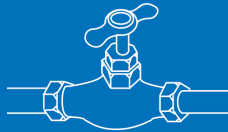
## Frozen pipes

- Contact us immediately and turn off the water at the main stoptap
- Leave the pipes frozen, but you may try to thaw them using a hot water bottle. Don't use a blow lamp
- If the hot water system is frozen, don't light the boiler (or if it's already on, turn it off) and turn off any water heaters
- If pipes have frozen because you haven't followed our advice we will charge you to repair them and to repair any consequential damage.

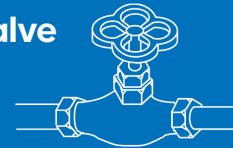
## Burst pipes

- Contact us immediately and turn off the water at the main stoptap unless the pipe can be isolated locally or the leak contained
- Turn off any water heaters and put out any coal fire that heats a back boiler
- Turn on all taps to drain water from the system. This may take about 15 minutes
- When the water stops running, turn all taps off
- If electrics are getting wet, don't touch. Turn off electricity at the consumer unit/fuse box
- If water leaks and makes the ceiling bulge, place a bucket under the bulge in case water leaks through.

**Stoptap**



**Gate valve**



# Condensation, Damp & Mould

## What is condensation?

- Condensation happens when moist air comes into contact with a cool surface and water droplets form. This is what happens when your bathroom mirror steams up or you pour a cold drink on a hot day. When this happens on a cold internal surface, such as toilet system, a wall or floor, moisture is produced and the surface can become damp and in some cases wet. Mould will often then grow on these damp areas. Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather outside is dry.

## How can we reduce condensation?

- Keep your home at a constant temperature and well ventilated
- Avoid drying clothes indoors where possible. If clothes must be dried indoors, try to dry them in the bathroom with the

door closed and the extractor fan left running or a window slightly ajar (on the catch) to allow air flow

- Keep the kitchen door closed when cooking
- Keep lids on pots and pans when cooking and avoid excessive boiling
- Keep the bathroom door closed particularly during and after bathing/showering
- Don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes - make sure air can circulate
- Don't keep furniture and beds hard against external walls and make sure air can circulate
- Ventilate rooms at risk; trickle vents on windows should be used
- When using a tumble dryer make sure the hose is put out of the window or door. Alternatively use a condensing type tumble drier
- Put a small amount of cold water in the bath first before running the hot water, as this can reduce the steam by 90%

- Don't trap heat - avoid placing large pieces of furniture in front of a radiator this prevents the heat from circulating
- Keep curtains above radiators
- Keep room doors closed where possible to prevent moisture spreading throughout the property
- Wipe down surfaces in bathroom after bathing/showering.

### **What to do if condensation does occur**

- Wipe down and remove condensation each morning from damp surfaces such as windows and toilets systems with a dry cloth or towel on a daily basis. The cloth should then be placed in the washing machine not hung inside to dry
- Open windows slightly to increase airflow.

### **What if mould occurs?**

- If you already have mould on surfaces such as around windows and on walls you need to treat it. Untreated mould will increase and will spread to other areas of your home
- Mould can be treated using products that are readily available from most supermarkets or DIY outlets
- If you have mould on furnishings such as curtains these should be cleaned otherwise the cycle of mould will continue and spreads elsewhere in your home.

### **What if I require further information?**

- If you require further advice regarding condensation and mould please contact us on **0333 4008266**.

Your home is  
fitted with continuous  
running extractor fans -  
**Please do not switch them off.**

# Repairs carried out in each response category

## Emergency repairs

Any repair problem which puts the health, safety or security of you or anyone else at urgent risk, or which causes problems to the building.

Some emergency repairs might be:

- No water in your home
- Burst water main
- Flooding
- Severe storm damage
- No electricity in your home
- Major problems with your electricity
- Unsafe electricity fittings
- Total loss of gas supply (phone National Grid Gas)
- Gas leak (phone National Grid Gas)

- Blocked flue
- Complete heating loss
- Lift not working
- Warden alarm/call system not working
- Fire damage
- Breaches of security to outside doors and ground floor windows
- Blocked mains drains, soil pipe or if the only WC in your home is blocked.

## Urgent repairs

Some repairs might be:

- Small plumbing leaks or problems
- Problems with your toilet cistern
- Heating problems or breakdown
- Hot water problems or breakdown
- Small electrical faults

- Roof leaks
- Security of internal doors and windows
- Entry phone not working
- Communal TV aerial not working fully
- Damage to treads or handrails/banister
- Overflows that can't be controlled or stopped.

### **Routine repairs**

Some routine repairs might be:

- General carpentry repairs
- Repairs to doors, windows and floors
- Repairs to outside walls, fences and paths
- Repairs to walls, brickwork and slates/tiles
- Repairs or clearing of gutters and downpipes
- Repairs to kitchen fittings
- Repairs to plaster work
- Other small plumbing repairs including overflows

- Repairs to tiling
- Easing windows and doors
- Other small day-to-day repairs or replacements.

### **Where is it in your home?**

Note down where your gas meter, electricity consumer unit/fuse box and mains water stoptap are.

**Gas meter:** .....

.....

**Consumer unit (fuse box):** .....

.....

**Mains water stoptap:** .....

.....

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