

# Protect your Water Pipes from Freezing

It is that time of the year once again: the days have got shorter and the temperature has begun to drop. Schools are therefore at risk of expensive escape of water damage following damage to and fracturing of cold water pipes. Schools are particularly vulnerable due to being unoccupied over weekends and during the holiday period, when a burst pipe can potentially remain undetected for a significant period of time.

Claims triggered by escape of water can include damage to ceilings and flooring and a need for redecoration. Contents cover includes damage to fabrics and carpets and if electrical equipment or wiring is affected this can significantly increase the claim value and the disruption caused to students and staff.



The effects of this problem can be mitigated, or even prevented, through some basic checks and steps. Taking action ahead of winter is key, as are consistent onward checks. Below we offer some practical guidance on protecting your school water pipes from damage and minimising disruption to your students and staff.

## Careful inspections

- Check and maintain heating systems regularly
- Check that pipes and water tanks are well lagged, especially in roof spaces
- Check for leaks, drips and overflows as this could indicate problems

## Regular maintenance

- Ensure plans for buildings showing the location of stop cocks are available in an emergency
- Check that stop cocks can be operated easily if needed.
- Maintenance regimes should include clearing gutters of debris to reduce blockages and water overflow
- Protect and insulate external taps and pipes from frost
- Fit water management devices that detect falls or increases in pressure that could be due to burst pipes and automatically turn off the water supply
- Install a bund wall around water tanks to catch leaking water, preventing damage in the building.

## Temperature control

- Fit frost thermostats and check existing frost thermostats are situated in the coldest part of the building to ensure they work effectively
- Set heating system thermostats to 10°C to maintain ambient temperature to prevent water pipes freezing

**If buildings are left unoccupied for more than 30 days, drain all pipes, tanks and heating systems and disconnect water supplies**