

## **Lag your pipes**

As we all know the British winter can be very harsh and when the temperature falls, it can put your water supply at risk. A frozen pipe will not only leave you without water, it can cause severe damage or even flooding when it falls out. The answer to the problem is simple; lag your pipes, especially to outside taps and supplies to garages and out buildings.

It's advisable as the winter months draw in to isolate all your outside taps, garages and outbuildings. To do this, find the supply and turn it off. Once you've turned it off, go outside to the outside taps and open them to drain off the excess water. It's important to remember, it's not just your outbuildings and outside taps that need lagging, it's all the pipework in your house, hot and cold pipes. Especially pay attention to tanks in your loft, they need to be lined with jackets above and around the side, but never below. You need the warmth from the house to keep the water from freezing.

Right, now I want to show you how to lag your pipes. All you need is some basic tools; first of all measure how much you'll need and go to your local DIY merchant and pick up this sausage type lagging. On the side of the lagging, you'll see the numbers 15 and 13. 15 is a diameter of your pipe and 13 shows the thickness of the lagging. It's very easy to use; you can run your finger down to slice it open. You can also buy an outside tap kit, these are very handy. Here's a bit I cut earlier.

So what you do, clip it onto the pipe and make it nice and snug. When you come to a 45 degree angle just cut the lagging like so and it will meet up nice and snug and then you can use one of these, these are very simple. Just cover it over the tap like so, make it nice and snug, put your lid on, push that up inside and then make sure you tape it all up wherever there's a joint to make it nice and tight, and that's it. It's that simple, job done.

If you do get frozen pipes we have another video on how to deal with this.

## **How to manage high consumption**

Do you think your water consumption is high? Well consider this. On average people in the UK use 150 litres of water per person, per day. That's more than a bath full and in our region it's even more.

How about you? Have you thought about how much water you use everyday? If you're a family of four the chances are it's in the region of 500 litres per day. That's around 880 pints or enough for 2000 cups of tea, everyday. Here in the UK, we have the same amount of rainfall as a hot country like Spain but being more densely populated means we have less water to share around. So be aware of how much water you're using and how much water you might be wasting. Think about how many baths or power showers you take, do you turn the tap off when you brush your teeth? And how much cooking do you do? Think about, have you had friends and family staying for a while? Do you still think you have high water consumption? Well, let's have a look...

### **Step 1 Do you have a leak?**

First thing you need to establish is have you got a leak? If you've got a water meter it's easier to check. All you need to do is make sure all your taps are turned off and your toilet hasn't recently flushed. Also, turn off your dishwasher and washing machine. Then come outside and look for your water meter, lift the cover and check. You'll see a little dial on top of the meter; if it's spinning, it's more than likely that you've got a leak somewhere.

### **Step 2 Where is the leak – inside?**

The slightest of drips can cause a lot of wasted water, so you need to go around your house and check all your toilets and taps. One of the most common leaks you can get is in your toilet. The way to check this is to lift up the lid and take a close look at the pan. If you see a trickle of water running down there, then you've got a leak that you need to get repaired.

### **Step 3 Where is the leak – outside water supply pipe?**

Turn off your internal stop tap. If you don't know where it is we've got a video to help you find it. If the dial continues to turn, you've most probably got a supply pipe leak. We've got a list of industry approved plumbers on our website that can help you.

### **Dealing with frozen pipes**

If you have no water in your property and it's very cold outside, it may be because your pipes are frozen. We can't help you with this because it's inside your property. In most cases all you have to do is wait. Once the day warms up or your heating starts, this will usually rectify the problem. If it doesn't you could try some gentle heat, like a hair dryer, on the pipe near your stop tap, just gently warm it up. Never, ever use a blow torch or a naked flame, because you'll be doing more harm than good.

### **Finding your outside stop tap**

Everyone should know where their external stop tap is. Before you begin looking for it, you'll need a flat headed screw driver (like this) and a torch. If you go to the boundary of your property, they're normally located near the footpath. You are looking for an 8 inches iron or plastic cover.

Before you turn off your external stop tap, it may be advisable to check that you're not on a shared supply. Sometimes one stop tap serves more than one property. If you live in a flat, you may turn off more than one of the flats, so it's advisable to check with your landlord or your management company before you turn the water off.

If you see a water meter in there, then normally that's your own stop tap. If your meter is fitted outside, it will be located at your external stop tap.

### **Finding your inside stop tap**

It is really important to know where your inside stop tap is, in case there's an emergency or you have to do some maintenance in your house. They are normally under the kitchen sink. This one's in the downstairs loo. You may find it in a garage or a utility room. If you can't find it, check with your neighbours – they're normally in the same place.

You always have to make sure it's operable. You can do this by operating it – turning it on and off two to three times a year. If it is in an inaccessible place or hard to get to, you may want to invest in a Surestop. These turn the water off at the flick of a switch. Details are on our website.

### **Reading your water meter**

More and more properties have got water meters fitted. So if you want to know how much water you use, it is important to know where your water meter is located. They are normally located on the public footpath or at the bottom of your garden, near the boundary. If you live in a flat, it may be located by your internal stop tap.

If you need to read your water meter, it's easy. All you need to do is flip the lid up, pull out the frost pad and look down. You'll see some white numbers on black. They're the ones you need to worry about – they're your cubic metres. Don't worry about the red numbers, they are just for us. All you need is an up-to-date reading and your customer number. Then you can text it to us, go online or you can just give us a ring.

### **Preventing future problems**

Did you know you're generally responsible for the water supply pipe all the way from inside your property to the boundary? This can be very expensive and awkward to repair. Your own home insurance may cover you but this is not always the case, so it is well worth checking. If you've got a dripping tap it is important to get it fixed – nobody wants to be wasting water. We have a list of industry approved plumbers on our website.

If you are going away for a few weeks or the property is going to be empty for a while, I recommend you turn off your internal stop tap. You don't want to come home to a flooded kitchen or a leak in the house. I've made a video of how to locate your internal stop tap on the website.

If you are considering changing from an older style boiler to a new mega-flow or combination system, it is important that you have enough flow and pressure. Ask your plumber to check this for you.

## **Water efficiency in the home**

Water is a precious resource. It might not seem like that on a cold day when it's pouring with rain, but in the Southeast of England is the driest region in the UK with an ever-increasing population, that it makes sense not to waste it. Here are some top tips on how we can save water indoors.

Even little changes make a big difference. So let's take a look around the house and see how we can save. When looking at buying a new washing machine or dishwasher always look for the eco label. This will tell you which machine is the most efficient. The water wise recommended check mark also tells you if the machines met tough standards for water saving, and another thing that will save you in the long run is to wait until the machine is full up before switching it on.

In most modern taps you can fit tap aerators, these decrease the flow rate, saving you water. They are simple to fit, just put them on like so. Mixer taps, great for controlling temperature, don't let the cold water run away. Pop a jug or a bottle underneath it, fill it up and then pop it in the fridge for later, you've got a nice cold drink.

There's plenty of ways of saving water in the bathroom too. If you have an old type toilet, probably with a handle like this, you could fit a save a flush. You can save 5000 litres a year with one of these. There are some water efficient shower heads on the market that mix air with water, saving water. This one can save up to eleven thousand litres per year. As well as using less, it makes the water feel softer. But keep in mind, they only work with mains fed showers and are not suitable for electric showers. Alternatively, you could fit a shower save. The shower save is designed to go into mains fed shower hose. This will help regulate the hot water flow to eight liters per minute. Thus saving you water every time you have a shower. Saving you energy and money, and cutting your utility bills.

Here's a little two-minute timer to remind your kids how long they need to brush their teeth for, with the taps turned off before rinsing out their mouths. Here's another little saver, a four minute timer for your shower. All these small savings will have a surprising effect on your bills at the end of the year. For more information and for free and discounted water saving devices, visit our website.

Check out my other video on how to be water efficient outside.

## **Water efficiency outside**

Hello. Welcome to this video guide on how to be more water efficient outdoors. Here are a few simple tips to save water when you're doing tasks outside the house.

One tip is to use this bucket and sponge when you're washing your car. Hose pipes are one of the greatest water guzzlers using a massive 18 litres per minute, that's about 78 buckets in an hour. That's the same amount of water that the average family uses in a whole day. If everyone in the UK washed their car for half an hour with a hose pipe that would be enough to fill 13 Wembley stadiums or a colossal 1 billion buckets. Same if you're watering the garden, use a watering can. If you do have to use a hose, think about using one of these - a

trigger nozzle. That way waters not spraying everywhere all the time. For more information on where to purchase these visit our website.

On hot days watering plants is best done either early in the morning or in the evening. It means more water goes into the ground for your plants to drink and less water evaporates into the air in the midday sunshine. Also think about getting some plants that don't need so much water, seedlings for instance are the plant equivalent of camels.

Using the roof to collect rainwater in a water butt is a great idea, best of all it's free and you can use it for later watering your plants or even topping up a pond if you have one. You can purchase them from your local DIY store, with a little tap on the bottom to fill your watering can or even make one yourself. For more information visit our website.

The water that comes out of your tap contains a very small amount of chlorine, to eliminate pollutants so it's safe for you to drink. However, this can be quite bad for fish so it's best to use rain water collected from a water butt for your pond.

Every little helps when it comes to saving water and if you're on a meter, saving water means saving energy and money. Have a look at my other videos on how to become more water efficient indoors.

See you soon.

### **How to install a water saving device**

Today I'm here to show you how to fit a water saving device. They're very easy to fit, with Save a Flush, all you have to do is lift the lid of the cistern and just drop it straight in. That's it, job done. That saves a litre every time you flush.

### **Discoloured or aerated water**

If you fill up a glass of water and it has a milky appearance, this is nothing to be concerned about. This is due to lots of tiny air bubbles in the water which make it appear white. To test if this is air, fill up a glass of water and leave it to stand. The water should clear from the bottom up.

Air in the water is not harmful but you may want to find out where it's coming from. If you run a tap for a couple of minutes and the water is still cloudy, this could indicate that the mains water is affected. There may have been a burst water main in the area, causing air to be trapped in the water. Ask a neighbour if they're affected too. If they are, contact your local water supplier and they will investigate it further.

If your neighbour's water isn't affected then it could be an internal issue. If your cold pipe sits close to your hot pipe, it can heat the water, which will make it cloudy. You'll notice the water runs warm at first and it should clear after running for a little while. If this is the case, lagging the pipes should solve this. Sometimes a leaky tap washer can cause cloudy water. You may hear a whistling sound when you turn the tap on, that'll be the air. All you will need to do is replace your tap washer.

If you notice your water is discoloured, check with your neighbours. You may have had a burst water main in your area, which can stir up sediment from cast iron mains.

If you are an affinity water customer look on our website to check if there are any incidents in your area. Running the taps will help flush discoloured water through the cistern. Do not use washing machines while the water is discoloured, as it may cause staining to your clothes. Discolouration can also be caused by your internal plumbing. If your waters discoloured first thing in the morning but then runs clear, this could be something to do with your water supply pipe, which is your responsibility to maintain. If you are unsure you can always contact your water supplier.

### **Tastes or odours**

On rare occasions you may notice your water smells and tastes of chlorine. We have to add chlorine to the water, to make it safe to drink and keep it free from bacteria. We keep chlorine levels to an absolute minimum. A number of things can make it more noticeable such as time of day, time of year or even a burst pipe in your area. Although it's safe to drink, if you can taste chlorine in your water you could put a jug of water in the fridge for a couple of hours. This will allow for any chlorine to evaporate. Make sure to discard any water that has not been used within 24 hours. If you find this doesn't improve your taste and odour, this could be down to a plumbing issue within your property.

Check with your neighbours to see if they are experiencing the same problem. If there water tastes fine, this is a good indication that the problem is internal. If you notice an antiseptic taste in hot drinks, it could be the rubber or plastic seal inside the kettle reacting with the chlorine causing the problem. Test this by making a hot drink using either a saucepan or a microwave, to see if you notice an improvement in the taste. Use fresh water every time you use your kettle and let lime scale build up inside to coat the seal to stop the taste from happening. Chlorine can also react with internal plumbing materials such as washing machines and dishwasher hoses. What old tap washers; this can also give an antiseptic taste to the water. To find out if the hose is the problem, you can isolate the machine by turning off the isolating valve. We advise you to do this for up to twenty-four hours.

Remember you want be able to use your washing machine or dishwasher while you do this. If you do notice an improvement to your taste and odour then fit a double check valve or WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) approved hose. This stops water from being drawn from the hoses to the cold tap. An antiseptic taste can also be caused by a garden hose being permanently connected to the outside tap.

It is a legal requirement to have an approved government checked valve fitted. Disconnect the hose and check you have one. A qualified plumber will be able to help you with this. We recommend to use a plumber who is a member of an approved contractor scheme, such as water save. If the taste is bitter, it could be due to the internal pipe work, especially if it's new. It is usually more apparent first thing in the morning when the water has been sitting in your pipework overnight. If you experience this problem, run your tap and get rid of any water that's been sitting in the pipes overnight, particularly in the morning or when left for a long period of time.

A stagnant or sewage type odour can sometimes occur from the plughole, making the water seem to have an odour. Fill a glass of water and take it in to another room, away from the kitchen sink. This will help determine whether the odour is genuinely coming from the water or not. If it smells fine this will indicate the problem could be with your drains, caused by a possible blockage. If it still has a sewage odour, contact your local water supplier immediately. If your water has a milky appearance, take a look at my other video on aeration.

### **Dealing with Bogus Callers**

In some areas we have problems with bogus callers. So before you ever let anyone into your house always ask to see ID, like this. If we do come to your property, we will be in uniform and we will never ask to go upstairs.

If you are worried, always ask to check the ID again. Also, you can join a Safeguard scheme either online or over the telephone. This way you can set up a password to ask one of us when we come to your door, to make you feel more secure.