

# Winter Warning (Burst Pipes)

To avoid scenes like these at your school this winter, there are a number of actions you should consider in order to manage the risks from severe weather.

Burst pipes can have a devastating effect on your school. Apart from the initial clear up and drying out process, which can be extensive and distressing, there can follow months of disruption from contractors that will require temporary workarounds and frustration.

The main risk period is clearly the festive holiday break when schools close down or have reduced occupancy. Last winter during the festive break the Risk and Insurance Team dealt with 55 claims from schools that had suffered damage from burst pipes. This was an unprecedented number and cost the insurance fund half a million pounds.



Ceiling panels brought down by a burst pipe in the roof

When severe cold weather corresponds with the festive break the risk is of course increased. Since we have no control over the weather we are very keen to make sure that everything that can be done to reduce the risk is being done.

Listed below are a number of general and specific precautions that we recommend schools carry out in order to manage this risk as far as reasonably practicable.

## General

- Ensure heating systems receive regular maintenance
- Check and ensure all at risk water pipes and taps (external, in roof spaces, etc.) are properly lagged
- Ensure water tanks are lagged
- Check for leaks and drips especially from overflows as these could indicate a problem
- Ensure you are aware of the location of stopcocks for the main school, mobiles and other external buildings
- Check that your business continuity and emergency plans are up to date with appropriate actions and accurate contact numbers, look on SchoolsNet for more information or e-mail [businesscontinuity@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:businesscontinuity@norfolk.gov.uk).

**Before closing down for the Xmas holiday** (particularly if the school will be unoccupied for most or all of the entire holiday period)

- Ensure heating system thermostats are working and the system remains on at around 10°C during the holiday
- Ensure there are sufficient levels of Oil/LPG in the tanks to fuel the heating system for the holiday period
- Turn water off at main stop cocks and any external isolation valves to mobiles or other external buildings
- Open taps in toilets and kitchens to drain water from pipes (only necessary if building to remain unoccupied)
- Make regular checks on the school during the holiday if low temperatures occur
- Open hatches to loft spaces to allow warmer air to circulate.

### **On return from holiday**

- Keep water supply turned off while bringing the temperatures up to normal levels
- Check for any leakage as rooms warm up and pipes thaw
- If a pipe or joint has fractured, do not turn the supply back on, contact a plumber
- Close all taps and open the stopcocks and check for any leaks.



### **If internal flooding is discovered**

- Notify the insurance section on 01603 222839. BMP3 members should contact their Service Contractors on the emergency numbers provided
- Be safe, assess the situation but do not take any unnecessary risks
- If water is near to electrical equipment or switch gear, isolate electrics
- Remove any electrical items from the affected area and put them in a ventilated area where they can dry out. Do not use them until they have been tested.
- Remove any wooden or composite furniture from wet flooring
- Take advice given to you by our claims handler.

It is recognised that some of the above precautions might create a small amount of extra expenditure for the school. However this must be balanced against both the financial, emotional and operational costs of recovery from burst pipe damage.

The insurance costs from last year cannot be sustained without passing those costs back to schools in premium increases, therefore in the event of a claim you may be asked to confirm, and where applicable provide evidence, that the above precautions were taken. If it is evident that these precautions were not taken, we reserve the right to refuse your claim.