

Winter guidance pack



Weather Warnings

Now that the seasons are changing and the weather is getting colder, it's really important to prepare for severe weather warnings.

Service status

During the colder months or severe weather, we get a lot more calls for our gas and repairs services. If the amount of calls we receive affects our ability to meet our regular response times, we may need to change our service status.

You can find out more about our service status by visiting our helpful web page: midlandheart.org.uk/servicestatus



Severe weather

It's really important to make sure you're prepared for weather emergencies. These can include floodings, blizzards, heavy snow and ice.

Some things you can do to prepare are:



Make sure you have non-perishable foods such as long life milk, dry foods and tinned goods in your cupboards just in case you can't go out



Making sure you have an emergency kit with things such as batteries, torches, matches, and a list of emergency contact numbers



Make sure you have extra things in the house such as hot water bottles, blankets, extra clothing



If you have a car, make sure it's parked away from trees, walls and fences depending on the type of severe weather



Have an evacuation plan in place in case you need to leave the building

You can find some helpful information on winter planning on our website: midlandheart.org.uk/winterplanning

For more handy information on severe weather and action plans, you can visit the GOV.uk website: prepare.campaign.gov.uk



Gritting

Please be aware that it's not our responsibility to grit or arrange gritting around schemes. Grit bins are available in various locations across the scheme. Residents are free to use this to grit around their own properties if they feel it's required, at their own risk.

Residents are advised that before going outside during a period where we're experiencing severe weather, they should do so after assessing if the journey is necessary. This decision sits with residents and is made at their own risk.

We strongly advise against anyone going out during snowy or icy weather, even if the scheme has been gritted. Please be extra careful when walking on snow or ice if you do need to go outside.



Home insurance

As part of your monthly service charge payments, there's a contribution towards building insurance. You can ask for a copy of the 'Summary of Cover' from your Scheme Manager or Retirement Living Manager, as this outlines what the building insurance policy covers and how you can make a claim if you need to. If you would like a printed copy, please call our Hub team on 0345 60 20 540 and they'll be happy to help.

It's important to know that if you need to make a claim, you call the insurance provider directly yourself. This is because they will ask you for specific details of the loss or damage you have suffered. By speaking with the insurance provider yourself, it'll save any delay and any unnecessary back and forth.

You can find out more about home contents insurance and how to apply here: midlandheart.org.uk/my-home/keeping-my-home-safe/home-contents-insurance





Heating outages

You'll be responsible for all maintenance and necessary repairs to your home, this includes drains, pipes, and sanitary and water apparatus that are used exclusively by you/your property.

Frozen pipes and stop taps

During freezing temperatures, we receive a lot of calls about failed heating and hot water systems. Most often, the problem is because of frozen pipes.

It's strongly recommended to test your central heating system during late summer or early autumn, so you have enough time to repair anything that isn't working as it should be. We have some handy information about heating systems on our web page: midlandheart.org.uk/heatingsystems

We have some helpful tips on our website on how you can prevent and fix frozen pipes during cold weather. This advice can save you from calling us and waiting to speak to our Repairs Hub, as you can often fix the problem in the time it takes to call in.

For more useful information and a handy video on how to fix your frozen pipes, visit our web page: midlandheart.org.uk/frozenpipes



Who should I contact for repairs?

Whilst we can't make any specific recommendations for trades people who could do works for you, you may find it helpful to visit either www.checkatrade.com or www.trustatrader.com to help you identify a verified contractor if you need them.



TOP TIP



Keep a portable heater to hand in case of a boiler breakdown and make a note of where your stop tap is.

Candle and fire safety

While candles bring a lovely, warm glow and cosy feel into our homes, it's really important we keep an eye on them.

- Here are some things to keep in mind to keep safe in your home:
- Never leave them unattended
- Keep them away from children and pets
- Make sure there's a heatproof plate or candle holder underneath them
- Keep them out of drafts which can cause the flame to flicker.



There are more celebrations in the colder months that involve candles, pumpkins, bonfires, fireworks, sparklers etc so it's really important to keep in mind the dangers that these could bring and how to prevent them:



Keep Christmas trees away from radiators, light fittings and any possible sources of heat



Make sure decorations don't block any fire escapes, signage or firefighting equipment



Use LED candles if you can but if you use real ones, make sure they're not near anything flammable like decorations, your curtains or your Christmas tree



Most fires start in the kitchen, so don't leave your cooker unattended when it's turned on



When you leave a room, blow candles out to be safe and keep them away from children and pets



Don't build bonfires, set off fireworks or use sparklers in communal spaces

Testing your smoke alarm

It's really important to make sure your smoke alarm is working properly. You should test your smoke alarm every month.

You can test it by pressing the test button, which should ring with an alarm to show it's working correctly. If your smoke alarm is beeping for no obvious reason, you'll need to change the batteries.

If you think your smoke alarm is faulty, you need to let us know immediately by calling **0345 60 20 540**. We'll arrange a repair as soon as possible or we will replace the device completely.

You can find out more handy information on smoke alarms here: midlandheart.org.uk/checkyouralarms





Money Advice

If you're struggling to pay your rent, it's really important that you speak to us. We can refer you to our Money Advice team who will help you to get back on track. Call us on **0345 60 20 540** as soon as possible and we'll have a chat to figure out what we can do to help.

What is the Money Advice service?

Our Money Advice team offers free and confidential advice to help you to manage your finances. They can help you work through any financial problems that you're having and find a solution that suits you.

What support can your Money Advice team offer?

Our advisors will look carefully at your individual situation to offer the best way forward for you. They can help you to:

- Claim benefits
- Apply for reconsiderations
- Attend tribunals
- Resolve debt problems
- Challenge unenforceable debt
- Budget your finances
- Access foodbanks

Our Money Advice service is only available to our tenants, this includes tenants living in any of our homes or schemes.



Power cuts

Power cuts can happen at any time and are often unexpected, but they are more common over the winter period. However, there are some things you can do to make sure you're prepared.

Here are some useful tips to keep in mind:



Make sure your mobile phone is charged and on you at all times in case you need to use it



Keep torches, extra batteries, portable chargers and spare blankets in a place you can easily get to in the dark



Stock up on non-perishable foods such as long life milk, dry foods and tinned goods



Make sure you have foods that you can prepare without electricity such as fruit, salad, cereal, bread and tinned meats



Consider buying a battery-powered radio to keep up to date on local updates if you can't use your mobile



Make sure any medical equipment has a back-up battery

You can find more handy information on our web page: midlandheart.org.uk/powercuts



Managing damp and mould

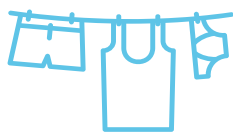
If you notice damp and mould in your home, it's really important to treat it as early as possible before the issue gets worse. Don't panic if you do find mould – lots of homes have it, it's only when it is found in large quantities that it can cause problems.



How to prevent damp and mould in your home:



Ventilate your home - To prevent moisture from spreading throughout your house, close doors when you're cooking, having a bath or sleeping. Use extractor fans and open windows slightly to reduce condensation. Move furniture slightly away from walls to make sure air can circulate behind it.



Reduce the amount of moist air – This is important to reduce condensation and damp. Dry clothes on a drying rack next to an open window rather than on a radiator. If the weather is good, dry your clothes outside on a washing line. Fill your bath with 1-2 inches of cold water before adding hot water, to reduce condensation by around 90%.



Wipe away condensation - This can be on windows and sills, surfaces in your kitchen and your bathroom. Wiping condensation away with a dry cloth will help prevent mould from growing.

For more handy information about tackling damp and mould in your home, you can visit our web page: midlandheart.org.uk/damp



Midland Heart, 20 Bath Row,
Birmingham, B15 1LZ

Got a question?
Get in touch



0345 60 20 540



@MidlandHeart



midlandheart.org.uk