

## Winter precautions

If your water pipes are outside or in an exposed position where they might freeze, lag them as well as possible with towels blankets or paper. Report the problem to the Property Services Section.

### When winter starts

Check to ensure you know where your main stopcock is. Don't leave taps dripping. If they leak get them repaired.

If pipes do freeze:

- ▶ Make sure all taps are turned off
- ▶ Turn the water off at the stopcock. This helps stop flooding if the pipes burst. Contact Property Services Section.

If you are going away during the colder months:

- ▶ Turn your water heaters off
- ▶ Turn your mains water off
- ▶ Run water off from your system by opening all taps. Wait until the water stops running, then close all taps
- ▶ Tell your neighbours and leave a set of keys with someone you trust who can be contacted quickly. Make sure your Housing Officer or neighbour knows who this is.

When you come back:

- ▶ Open the tap to the bath and then turn the stopcock on again
- ▶ Watch the water until it runs freely again and then turn the tap off
- ▶ If the water does not run properly, you could have an airlock in one of the pipes - let us know so that we can help you sort it out.

## Home safety

The home can be a dangerous place. Each year more people are killed or injured by accidents in the home than by any other type of accident. Remember, a few simple rules may prevent this happening to you:

- ▶ Keep stairs well lit
- ▶ Replace light bulbs at once when necessary
- ▶ Make sure floor surfaces are in good condition and not slippery
- ▶ Make sure steps and stepladders are properly secured before climbing up.
- ▶ Never overstretch when you are up a ladder or on steps. Get down and move them.

### Smoke Alarms save lives

We strongly recommend that you fit smoke alarms in your homes. You can buy inexpensive smoke alarms from supermarkets, DIY stores and hardware shops. Make sure that they conform to the standard BS5446 Part 1 and that you follow the manufacturers' instructions for testing and changing the battery. Further advice and information can be obtained from the Property services team.



# Looking after your home



## Identification of callers

Before allowing someone into your home, you should always check their identity. All ASRA staff and contractors carry identification cards and contractors will have a written repair order, unless they have come to deal with an emergency.

Gas, electricity, water companies and council employees always have means of identification. You are advised to check the identity and reason for calling of any person claiming to call on business. If you are uncertain in any way, please check with your housing office.

## Shared gardens and shared areas

Where houses are converted into two or more flats, tenants are responsible for cleaning the hallways, staircases and landing unless this is covered by a service charge and the work carried out by one of ASRA's contractors. Please arrange and agree responsibilities with the other tenants to look after the different parts. ASRA will arrange the redecoration of communal hallways and staircases when necessary and to maintain them in reasonable condition.

Tenants are also responsible for the upkeep of communal gardens if this work is not covered by a service charge. If you share such a garden, please make suitable arrangements with your neighbours and ensure that the garden is cultivated and kept in reasonable condition.

## Parking

There are some areas of shared parking spaces, which are there for any tenant or visitor. Specific parking spaces will be arranged where possible for disabled people. Please be considerate and leave these spaces for tenants with mobility problems.

Please park carefully, so that obstructions are not caused to other drivers, pedestrians and the emergency services, and so that damage is not caused to grassed areas, pathways etc.

Some of our schemes have special parking arrangements such as wheel clamping schemes. Your housing officer will inform you of any special arrangements.



## Refuse

If you have a refuse bin please prevent it from smelling by regularly cleaning it and wrapping up moist rubbish (tea bags, peelings etc.). Rubbish should not be allowed to overflow, as this encourages rats and mice. If you do have any surplus refuses, please wrap it up in a sealed plastic bag so it can be easily collected and is not a health risk. Rubbish should only be put out on the day of collection.

If you have a rubbish chute, please consider your neighbours and do not use it between 11 pm and 7am. Large items should either be taken to a council dump or may be collected by your local council by arrangement. Please note that dustbins are not provided by ASRA and all tenants are responsible for buying their own bin if one is not provided by the local authority.

## Holidays

You should pay rent before you go on holiday to cover the period when you are away. However, if you pay by giro, payment can be made at post offices or banks throughout the country. It is advisable to turn the water off at the mains and unplug electrical appliances, which are not in use. In some cases it may not be possible to turn off your water as the stopcock may be in another property. If the stopcock is in your home, please do not turn it off if it controls water to more than one flat.

It may be a good idea to ask a neighbour to keep an eye on your home while you are away. You may also wish to inform the police, or the organiser of your local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, if you have one in your area.

## Alterations and improvements

You may carry out some improvements or alterations to your home but you must obtain our permission before work can go ahead. Although this permission cannot be unreasonably withheld, certain conditions may be given.

## Aerials and satellite dishes

You must obtain our permission before installing an aerial or a satellite dish. Qualified contractors who are covered by insurance must undertake the work. Most blocks of flats have a communal TV aerial, the maintenance cost of which is covered by your service charge.

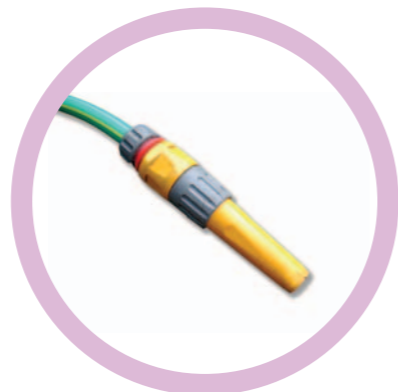
## Washing machines

If you want to connect your washing machine direct to the water and drainage services, you must get our permission. We will give permission for the work to be done provided that approved contractors are used. The maker's instructions for fitting the machine must be followed.

## Saving water

Don't use more water than you need, it can be very expensive

- ▶ Don't leave taps running
- ▶ Have a shower instead of a bath, as often as you can
- ▶ Don't use hose pipes
- ▶ Water your garden and indoor plants and wash your car with washing up water if you can.



## Condensation

If you have:

- ▶ Mould growing on walls or furniture
- ▶ Steamed up windows
- ▶ Rotting window frames and sills

You probably have a problem with condensation. The best way to tackle condensation is to:

- ▶ Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into colder rooms
- ▶ Open kitchen and bathroom windows when cooking and after a bath
- ▶ Have your windows open for about 30 minutes each day to let air in to circulate. Even if you have draught-proofing strips on plastic over the window, leave space for air to get through
- ▶ Avoid drying clothes inside as this can increase condensation. Keep a window open, especially if using a tumble dryer.
- ▶ Not block air vents or fan outlets
- ▶ Do not switch off automatic extractor fans in kitchen and bathrooms
- ▶ Not use bottled or paraffin heaters
- ▶ Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould growth

If mould forms:

- ▶ Wipe the mould off immediately with water.
- ▶ Do not use washing up liquid
- ▶ Apply a bleach solution (1 part bleach and 10 parts water) to the wall or use a recommended product available from a Do-it-Yourself outlet.

## Drains and sinks

Never pour fat, rice or tea leaves down your sink, they will block the drains. Regularly check the drain outside and clear it out if there is anything collected in it. If the drain does not have a grid, ask the Property Services section to get one for you.

If the sink is blocked:

- ▶ Pour boiling water down the plug hole
- ▶ If this doesn't work, use a plunger and/or proprietary products available from your hardware store or supermarket.
- ▶ Do not use soda, highly corrosive acids or similar solutions as they destroy plastic fittings
- ▶ If more than one fitting (bath, basin or sink) is blocked, the blockage may be in the soil stack or main drain. You will need to contact ASRA to get it unblocked.

## Changing a plug

New plugs can be obtained at a hardware shop and are all supplied with a diagram explaining how to do the wiring – follow it carefully. If you have any doubts, ask a friend or neighbour to help you.

## Toilets

Do not put nappies, sanitary towels or other large objects down the toilet (even if they are described as disposable). The toilet will eventually become blocked.

## Gutters

Keep gutters clear of leaves and rubbish, particularly in the autumn. If you don't, rain water will back up and overflow. This could lead to problems with damp. If you have tried to clear the gutter and there is still a problem, you should speak to the Property Services Section.

