

**WINTER WEATHER
PRECAUTIONS**

**Risk Directory
(December 2015)**

Introduction

Winter weather experienced across the United Kingdom shows the devastating impact snow, ice and low temperatures can have on businesses. Losses involve not only direct repair and replacement costs, but also loss of revenue due to business interruption and the possibility of employers' and public liability claims following injury.

This guidance seeks to provide information on measures that may assist in minimising risks arising from:

- Burst pipes.
- Snow and ice.
- High winds.



Burst Pipes

Prolonged freezing conditions can often lead to burst pipes, with significant damage frequently caused by escaping water. Water pipes and storage tanks are often located in the extremities of buildings, and may even be located externally. There may also be some water vessels and pipes used in industrial processes, or as part of a fire protection system, such as sprinkler systems. Measures to reduce the risk of burst pipes include:

- Maintaining a suitable temperature within premises, even when closed or during holiday periods, by providing heating on a frost thermostat basis. Heating systems should be regularly serviced.
- Where this cannot be achieved, trace heating in exposed areas could be provided. If portable heaters are required, consideration should be given to the use of lower hazard electric heaters, which should be suitably maintained.
- Pipes in exposed or unheated areas should be lagged.
- Water tanks should be insulated on all sides, but not underneath to allow warm air to circulate.
- Where there remains a possibility that pipes may freeze, the water supply should be disconnected and the pipes drained down.
- All stock, work in progress and other vulnerable contents should be stored off the floor to a minimum height of 150mm, ideally in racking or on stillages or pallets.

Snow and Ice

Snow and ice can create additional risks to both property and people. The risk of individuals slipping on snow and ice increases significantly, whilst snow coverings can damage any goods left out in the open. Significant snowfall can, in extreme circumstances, create excessive loads on roof structures. Melting snow and ice can also create large volumes of water, which can overwhelm drainage systems and result in local flooding.

Measures to reduce the risks associated with snow and ice include:

- Being aware of any forecast indicating inclement weather.
- Having procedures in place for snow and ice clearance. Whilst it may be impractical to clear large areas, footpaths and access routes should be cleared and appropriate signage displayed.
- Maintaining a stock of salt or grit for spreading ahead of forecast snowfall and freezing temperatures.
- Ensuring fire hydrant markers are kept clear of snow drifts.
- Regularly checking power and telephone cables for build-up of ice, and planning a safe method of removal.
- Planning for the safe removal of snow from vulnerable roof areas.
- Ensuring the building remains watertight and inspecting them for damage after periods of freezing weather.

High Winds

Whilst high winds may occur at any time, the combination of high winds, snow and freezing temperatures can cause extensive damage. A number of checks should be made in advance of winter:

- The roof and flashing should be regularly inspected to identify any damage.
- All vents, skylights and signage should be inspected to ensure they are watertight and secure.
- Doors and windows should be securely fixed to the building.
- Trees located close to the building and those considered at higher risk of collapse could be brought down. All trees should be inspected to ensure they remain safe.

All buildings should be inspected following severe storms.

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Specialisms include:

- Strategic risks.
- Business continuity and supply chain.
- Cyber risks.
- Online risk management systems.
- Liability claims defensibility.
- Health, safety and environment.
- Motor fleet risk management.
- Property risks.

If you would like to discuss any of these Risk Management services please contact the Risk Management department - General Division, on 0151 236 5656 or via the following e-mail address:

risk@griffithsandarmour.com

References, Acknowledgements and Recommended Further Reading

- Clear snow from a road, path or cycleway – www.gov.uk
- Met Office – www.metoffice.gov.uk

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