

A Guide to Maintaining Your Home



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GENERAL MAINTENANCE

Roofs

Make regular checks of the roof especially after high winds and snow.

If you spot a loose or missing slate or tile arrange for a repair to be carried out as soon as possible.

Also check for lead flashings lifting in high winds as this could cause water to enter the building.

Such repairs should be covered by your building insurance.

Rainwater gutters and downpipes

The most common causes of leaking rainwater gutters is damage by snow, damage caused by ladders being leaned against them and joints loosening due to the continual expansion and contraction.

Many rainwater gutters are manufactured from PVCu and are constantly expanding and contracting, the joints have a limited life and may need replacing, in addition the PVCu becomes brittle over time and will crack requiring replacement.

Gutters should be cleaned regularly to prevent the water overflowing and blocking the outlets.

Silt can build up significantly over time and leaves are a common source of blockage.

Gullies

Gullies should be regularly checked to ensure that they are not blocked. A blocked gulley can result in a build up of water that can cause dampness in the building.

Ground levels

Ensure that the ground level is maintained at a level 150 mm (6 inches) below the damp proof course. This will prevent the occurrence of rising damp. In some instances this is not always possible and the area should be tanked.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE

Windows and Doors

It is recommended that competent operatives carry out window cleaning, especially above ground floor.

Your attention is drawn to the section relating to the safe use of ladders.

All timber windows and doors should be regularly stained or painted. Failure to protect the timber will reduce the life expectancy of the windows and doors and ultimately will result in the timber rotting and the units requiring complete replacement.

The cleaning of silver aluminium windows can be carried using 'Solvol Autosol' aluminium polish which can be obtained from motor accessory shops.

The finish to damaged white aluminium windows can be repaired using 'Humbrol' enamel paint available from hobby shops.

Cleaning of white PVCu windows and doors should be carried out using a cream cleanser in warm water. Twice a year, spray WD40 into all the locks and on to any visible moving metal parts in particular friction stay hinges. This will help to keep them operating smoothly.

Do not use oil to lubricate squeaky hinges (or any nylon moving parts), use a furniture aerosol wax spray instead, which contains silicone.

Never allow the use of washing up liquid in the water when windows are cleaned – it attacks and degrades the seals.

Keep sliding patio door tracks brushed clean of mud, grit and dust. Do not lubricate the track.

Remember

A useful source of information in respect of home improvement and maintenance is available from local DIY stores such as B & Q, Wickes and Homebase in the form of leaflets.

HOW TO LOOK AFTER PVCU WINDOWS AND DOORS

The following information makes certain recommendations as to the manner in which you should care for your PVCu windows and doors.

Following these guidelines will assist in keeping your units looking good and working efficiently for many years to come.

Drainage

After a heavy shower of rain, you may find some water laying in the bottom of your door and window frames. This is nothing to worry about as this will drain away through the drainage holes in the base.

Leadwork

As with any new leadwork, when exposed to rain it will start an oxidation process which shows as white or mottled staining on the leadwork. When this process is complete, the lead will be dark grey in colour and will no longer stain. This process will take a few months to complete.

Locks

Twice a year, spray WD40 into all the locks and on to any metal contact surfaces around your doors and windows. This will help to keep them operating smoothly.

Cleaning PVC-U frames

NEVER use anything abrasive, this will scratch the surface which will trap dirt. Wash frames with a mild solution of washing-up liquid. If any stubborn marks remain, lightly rub with a crème cleaner such as cif. **DO NOT** use the crème cleaner on every occasion, as this will remove the shine from the PVCu.

Glass

Any type of glass cleaner is suitable, except where Rytec Clearshield has been used – refer to manufacturer's instructions.

Doors

To ensure a draught free door, please remember to keep the door in the locked position. This will achieve a tight fit on to the draught seals.

CONDENSATION

What is condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water will appear. This is condensation. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Is it Condensation?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, or leaking through a cracked pipe
- Rising damp due to defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course

These causes of damp often leave a “tidemark”.

If your home is damp for any of these reasons it may take weeks of heating and ventilation to dry out. Hiring a dehumidifier will help.

If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, then it is probably condensation.

How to avoid condensation

These three steps will help you to reduce the condensation in your home.

1. *Produce less moisture*

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly.

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable flue-less bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture in the air.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window or fan on.
- Vent any tumble dryer on the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type. DIY kits are available for this.

CONDENSATION

2. *Ventilate to remove moisture*

You can ventilate your home without making draughts.

- Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider. Or better still, use a humidistat controlled electric fan. These come on automatically when the air becomes humid, and are cheap to run.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. A door closer is advisable, as this will prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to get condensation.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many things in them as this stops the air circulating. Cut a ventilation slot in the back of each shelf or use slatted shelves. Cut “breather” holes in doors and in the back of wardrobes and leave space between the back of the wardrobe and the wall. Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
- If you replace your window units at any time, make sure that the new frames incorporate trickle ventilators.

3. *Insulate, draught-proof and heat your home*

- Insulate and draught proofing will help your home warm and will also cut fuel bills. When the whole home is warmer, condensation is less likely.
- Insulate your loft. Remember to draught-proof the loft hatch but do not block the opening under the eaves.
- Consider cavity wall insulation. Before deciding though, you should talk to your local building inspector as building regulations approval is required.
- Consider secondary and double glazing of windows to reduce heat loss and draughts but you must ensure there is some ventilation.
- In cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home.

Some words of warning:

- Do not block permanent ventilators.
- Do not completely block chimneys. Instead, leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over it.
- Do not draught-proof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- Do not draught-proof a room where there is a cooker or a fuel burning heater, for example, a gas fire.
- Do not draught-proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.

CONDENSATION

First steps against MOULD

- First treat any mould you may already have in your home. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation, mould should not reappear.
- To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety “approval number”. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions precisely. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness.

GAS APPLIANCES

Get them Checked Regularly

Every year some 30 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances which have not been properly installed or maintained. When gas does not burn properly, excess carbon monoxide is produced, which is toxic.

You can't see it. You can't taste it. You can't even smell it. But carbon monoxide can kill without warning in just a matter of hours. You are particularly vulnerable when you are asleep.

The early symptoms of poisoning include tiredness, drowsiness, headache, pains in the chest and stomach pains.

You are at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if:

- Your appliance was poorly installed
- Your appliance is not working properly
- Your appliance has not been checked or maintained regularly
- There is not enough fresh air in the room
- Your chimney or flue gets blocked up
- You allow unqualified people to install or maintain your appliance

There is a particular risk if you sleep in a room where an appliance, which is not of the room sealed type, is left burning at night. (Flue outlets for room sealed appliances are commonly located on an external wall at allow level protected by a cage rather than at or above roof level).

NEVER use a gas appliance if you think it's not working properly. Signs to look out for include yellow or orange flames, soot stains around the appliance and pilot lights that frequently blow out

NEVER cover an appliance or block the convection air vents

NEVER block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or air bricks

NEVER block or cover outside flues

CAUTION: whenever draught exclusion, double glazing or conservatory extension is fitted to a room containing a gas appliance, the appliance should subsequently be checked for safe operation.

GAS APPLIANCES

REMEMBER, for your protection:

By law all businesses which carry out work on gas appliances must be registered with CORGI (the Council for Registered Gas Installers). Always check your installer is registered by asking to see a current CORGO registration certificate or ringing CORGI on 01256 372300.

By law only a competent person – someone with the right knowledge and technical experience – can carry out work on gas appliances. Do-it-yourself work on gas appliances could be dangerous and illegal.

By law you must not use any gas appliance you know or suspect is not safe. Through CORGI, HSE has asked all registered installers to disconnect any gas appliances which is so dangerous as to be a threat to life if it is used. If your installer asks your permission to disconnect such an appliance it will be in the interests of your own safety, and that of others, to agree. Before you use this appliance again, have it repaired by a CORGI registered installation business.

By law landlords are responsible in certain circumstances for making sure that appliances are maintained in good order and checked for safety at least every 12 months. They must also keep a record of the safety checks and issue it to the tenant. If you live in, or are about to move into, rented accommodation, your landlord must provide you with written proof of the safety checks. If you own the appliance, you are responsible for its maintenance and safety checks.

By law with the exception of the room sealed type, there are restrictions on the installation of gas appliances in sleeping accommodation. These restrictions apply only appliances fitted after 1st January 1996. Non room sealed appliances of less than 14 kilowatts may be fitted as long as they have a device which automatically turns off the gas supply off before a dangerous level of toxic fumes builds up. However, non room sealed appliances above this threshold are prohibited in such accommodation.

If you need further advice about any of the gas safety issues mentioned above ring the HSE Gas Safety Advice Line on 0800 300 363.

ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS

Remember electricity is dangerous

Always use NICEIC or ECA approved contractors for any electrical work.

NICEIC

National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting,
Vintage House,
37, Albert Embankment,
London,
SE1 7UJ.

Tel: 020 7564 2323

Fax: 020 7564 2370

e-mail: enquiries@niceic.org.uk

ECA

Electrical Contractors Association,
ESCA House,
34, Palace Court,
London,
W2 4HY.

Tel: 020 7313 4800

Fax: 020 7221 7344

e-mail: electricalcontractors@eca.co.uk

Registered electricians will always display their membership of these organisations in all their publicity.

SECURITY

Background Information

Most burglaries are committed by opportunists. In two out of every ten burglaries they don't even have to use force - they get in through an open door or window.

Make sure you lock up behind you

Reduce the risk of burglary happening to you by following these simple precautions. For a relatively small amount you could make your home more secure and buy some peace of mind.

SECURITY MEASURES

Windows

A third of burglars get in through a back window so:

- Fit key operated, easily visible window locks to all downstairs windows, those windows that cannot be seen from the street and easily accessible upstairs windows
- Do not leave the keys in the locks
- If you have louvre windows, glue the slats in with an epoxy resin and fit a special louvre lock
- If you are replacing windows, consider laminated glass

Doors

- Make sure external doors and frames are strong and in good condition
- Fit and use a door chain
- Ensure all glazing panels are laminated glass
- Fit external doors with quality five-lever mortice deadlocks together with bolts top and bottom, do not forget to use them
- Fit quality locks to patio doors and French doors

Burglar Alarms

Visible burglar alarms make burglars think twice.

- Get specialist advice and a number of quotes before you buy
- Remember, alarms need servicing and a badly fitted alarm is a problem in itself

SECURITY

General

- Good lighting can deter a thief, install security lighting front and back
- As most burglaries happen when you are out - when you do go out, make it look as though you are still at home
- Never hide a spare key outside, it will be found
- Fit a strong, lockable gate to any side entrance
- Never leave a garage or shed unlocked and fit them with strong padlocks
- Have good perimeter security, it is your first line of defence. Check gates and fences for weak points, try some anti-crime landscaping by placing a thorny hedge around perimeter walls
- Join neighbourhood watch and work with your neighbours to keep the community safe
- Ask your local police about security marking your valuables. The police can give you a sticker for your windows advertising that you have done this

REMEMBER: burglars always go for the easy option.

Make sure they do not look at your property in that light.

For more detailed information contact your local Crime Prevention Officer on:
(01978) 290222

SAFE USE OF LADDERS

Securing a ladder

The foot of the ladder should be supported on a firm and level surface and should not rest either on loose material or on other equipment to gain extra height. Attachments for levelling up the feet on sloping surfaces should be properly fixed and used. In no case should the bottom rung be placed so that the total weight is carried on the rung; only the stiles are designed for this purpose.

It must be ensured that the ladder cannot slip and wherever practicable the top should be securely fixed. Slip may be prevented by the use of a lashing, strap or proprietary clip secured to both stiles or where suitable by equipment such as tie restraining straps or tensioned guys. On slippery floor surfaces special care is necessary to prevent the ladder foot from moving. Whilst lashings etc., are being fixed the ladder should be footed.

A ladder fitted with a proprietary spreader arm may be accepted as complying with 32 (2) (a) of the Construction (Working Places) Regulations 1966, provided that:

- (a) the ladder is in good condition
- (b) the ladder is of suitable quality for industrial use
- (c) the ladder is fitted with non-slip feet; and
- (d) the inclination of the ladder conforms with the one-in-four rule

Although there is no evidence that such proprietary devices cause wear or induce stresses that might make them unsuitable for use with a particular ladder, users are nonetheless recommended to ascertain from the ladder manufacturer whether a ladder is suitable for use with them. If the surface on which the foot of the ladder rests is not firm and level and does not provide adequate purchase for the non-slip feet, additional precautions should be taken to prevent outward movement of the foot of the ladder.

The head of the ladder should rest against a solid surface able to withstand the imposed loads. Where the surface may be frangible or brittle so that it cannot withstand such loads, equipment such as ladder stays must be supplied and used.

Where securing at the top is impracticable, arrangements must be made to prevent the ladder from slipping outwards or sideways. Methods of securing at the base include fixed blocks or cleats, sandbags or stakes embedded in the ground. Additionally, to help prevent slipping, most ladders can be fixed at the foot with pads, caps or sleeves.

SAFE USE OF LADDERS

Securing a ladder

In circumstances where it is impracticable to fix the ladder at the top or at the foot, a second person should be stationed at the foot to prevent slipping; this precaution, however, is considered to be effective only for ladders not more than 5 metres (16 ft) in overall length. The person 'footing' should face the ladder with a hand on each stile and with one foot resting on the bottom rung.

Leaning ladders

The stepping off rung should be level with the platform. Ladders should extend to a height of at least 1.05 m (3 ft 6 ins) above the landing place, or above the highest rung on which the user has to stand, unless there is a suitable handhold to provide equivalent support. This is necessary to reduce the risk of overbalancing when stepping off and on at the top.

The ladder should be placed at a suitable angle, ideally at about 75° to the horizontal, i.e. about 1 m out of every 4 m in height. The user should face the ladder when climbing or descending.

A ladder should be used only for the load and purpose for which it is designed. For example, a ladder should not have scaffold boards laid on its rungs and should not be used as an upright of a ladder scaffold unless it is of heavy duty and capable of carrying loads imposed. The rung of an ordinary ladder is designed to support the weight of a man and whatever lightweight tools he may be carrying, but not the additional weight of a ladder scaffold. A ladder should not be supported on a rung but on its stiles. Only one person at a time should be climbing the ladder.

Ladders with wire reinforced stiles or rungs must have the reinforcement on the underside when in use. Metal ladders, those with metal stile reinforcement, and wet ladders must not be used where any electrical hazards exists.

It is important that mud or grease etc is cleaned off footwear before any attempt is made to climb a ladder. Where ladders become contaminated they should be taken out of service and cleaned. There should be sufficient space behind the rung to provide a proper footing.

It can be dangerous for a person to carry loose tools manually up or down a ladder because he may be unable to grip the stiles; this is one of the most common causes of overbalancing. Light tools should be carried in a holster attached to a belt, or in a tool bag. Other tools and materials should be raised and lowered on a rope.

SAFE USE OF LADDERS

Extension ladders

Sections of extension ladders should overlap by a minimum of:

Up to 5 m (16 ft) closed length	- 1½ rungs
Between 5 m (16 ft) and 6 m (20 ft)	- 2½ rungs
Over 6 m (20 ft) closed length	- 3 rungs

The user should raise and lower the ladder from the base and should ensure that the hooks are properly engaged. The rung 1.05 m (3 ft 6 ins) from the top of a single section or an extension ladder is the highest to be used for climbing.

Long ladders

The height for which a ladder will be unsuitable for use depends on the space available, the nature of the work, the physical effort required to erect the ladder and the cost involved, for instance if more than one man is needed to erect it. Whilst two men may be able to handle a ladder longer than 11 m the weight involved may cause strain injury and beyond this height any movement in the ladder due to slipping or sliding will not be prevented by a single man footing the ladder; other recognised safe methods should be employed.

Step ladders

Step ladders and trestles are not designed for any degree of side loading and this should be avoided; they should be spread to their fullest extent and properly levelled for stability and should be placed at right angles to the work whenever possible, on a level surface. Work should not be carried out from the top platform nor should overhead work entail overreaching.

The top tread of a pair of steps, bucket or tool shelf should not be used for foot support unless there is an extension above the top to provide a handhold; rear parts of steps should not be used for foot support.

Step ladders are prevented from spreading by means of stays, chains or cords. These should be of sufficient and equal length, kept in good order, and should be renewed if found to be defective.

Only one person should use a step ladder at any one time and if steps are used in a doorway the door should be wedged open securely.

USEFUL CONTACTS

The Strategic Housing Service can provide a variety of help and information in respect of issues relating to your home.

The service covers:

- Enforcement of housing standards
- Advice to tenants and landlords
- Provision of financial aid to improve property
- Management of Housing Renewal Areas
- Advice on improving property.

For further information on the above contact:

**The Housing and Public Protection Department,
Ruthin Road,
Wrexham.
LL13 7TU**

Tel. (01978) 315300

USEFUL CONTACTS

Additionally the Council provides Building Control, Planning and Trading Standards Services:

Building Control: - (01978) 292050
Planning: - (01978) 292016
Trading Standards: - (01978) 296060

In addition the website www.wrexham.gov.uk is a useful source of information on all services provided by the Council and provides links to numerous other organisations.

Citizens Advice Bureau

For further information on the above contact:

Citizens Advice Bureau,
2, North Arc,
35, Grosvenor Road,
Wrexham,
LL11 1BT.

Tel: (01978) 364639

Wrexham Care and Repair

This organisation provides free advice and practical assistance with regards to repairs, renovations and adaptations to homes of older people (over 60).

For further information on the above contact:

Wrexham Care and Repair,
The Wrexham Foyer,
Crescent Road,
Wrexham,
LL13 8HF

Tel: (01978) 268120

Fax: (01978) 268121

For more information please contact us:

Strategic Housing Services
Housing and Public Protection
Ruthin Road, Wrexham, LL13 7TU.

Tel No: (01978) 315300

E-mail: arearenewal@wrexham.gov.uk