



Stay Well This Winter

Winter conditions can be seriously bad for our health, especially for people with long-term conditions such as COPD, bronchitis or emphysema. Older people are also vulnerable.

'Stay Well This Winter' is Health and Social Care's annual winter campaign. The campaign aims to help the public plan ahead for the winter months and take positive steps towards better health; to advise them on how to care for themselves; and to signpost where they can get advice.

Make sure you get your flu jab

For most people flu is a very unpleasant illness but, for those in 'at risk' groups, it can be very dangerous and sometimes fatal. Each year the strains of flu in circulation change, so new vaccines are formulated to reflect this. That is why it is so important that everyone who falls into an eligible category gets the vaccine every year. For more information and to see if you are eligible, visit [nidirect - Flu vaccine for adults](http://nidirect.gov.uk/stay-well)

Keep warm

Keep warm in winter to help prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression. Heat your home to at least 18°C (65°F). Keep your bedroom window closed on winter nights as breathing cold air can increase the risk of chest infections. Wear several layers of light clothes.

Look out for other people

Remember that other people, such as older neighbours, may need a bit of extra help over the winter. Icy pavements and cold weather can stop people from getting out and about. Keep in touch with friends, neighbours and family and ask if they need any help.

Self-care

Self-care is the best choice to treat minor illnesses and injuries.

Common winter illnesses such as earache, sore throat and colds can be treated with over-the-counter medicines. Your local pharmacist can provide advice and treatment without you having to visit a GP.

Prescription medicines

Make sure you get your prescription medicines before your pharmacy or GP practice closes for Christmas. If you've been prescribed antibiotics or any other medication, take them as directed. Taking antibiotics when they are not appropriate puts you and your family at risk.

You should always call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.

For more information visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/stay-well.

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NI Water Urges You to Wrap Up Warm for Winter!

With the winter wardrobe back out for another year - coats, hats and scarfs at the ready to keep us warm, it's a timely reminder that our house needs to have a winter coat on too!

Frozen pipes can burst and cause flooding, so it is vital when we are wrapping ourselves up that we take the time to make sure our pipes are well wrapped and protected from the cold weather.

Des Nevin, NI Water's Director of Customer Service Delivery says "It's

that time of year again, where we are asking the public to prepare for freezing temperatures and ensure that the water continues to 'flo' freely through the pipes all winter long. Over the coming months, NI Water winter mascot, Flo, will be delivering advice on what everyone needs to do to protect their property and possessions from the damage a burst pipe can create.

"The devastation caused by burst pipes cannot be underestimated. Not only can the water cause structural damage to a property, but the lasting damage in a home can be to personal items. Imagine losing electrical equipment such as mobile phones and tablets or irreplaceable memories such as photographs.

"On a wider scale, if you imagine the impact of thousands of litres of water pouring out of burst water pipes, it puts a huge strain on the distribution network. Insulating your pipework is an essential action to protect your water supply and that of your neighbours."

There are lots of simple things that homes and businesses can do to prepare for a cold winter, and there's no time like the present to get started:

- Wrap up pipes and water tanks with lagging – high street DIY stores have everything you need; remember the thicker the lagging the better the protection;
- Fix dripping taps – even a small

trickle can result in a frozen pipe;

- Find your property's stop tap and make sure you can turn it off – most are under the kitchen sink;
- Leave the heating on low if you go away for a winter break;
- Check your central heating boiler has been serviced – it should be serviced annually;
- Keep the name of an approved plumber handy – type in your postcode at www.watersafe.org.uk to find your nearest accredited plumbing business.

Visit niwater.com/winter-proof-your-home to watch our social media video featuring Flo and for further advice on how to protect your property this winter.



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**FROZEN
PIPES
CAN FLOOD
HOMES**

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) Command Support Unit

A recent meeting of the Multi Agency Civil Contingencies Northern Emergency Preparedness Group (NEPG) was held in Derry City & Strabane District Council in their Strabane offices.

NIFRS concluded the meeting by demonstrating their Command Support Unit (CSU) capabilities to Local Council and Government Partners. The CSU operates as a Silver Command Centre for the NIFRS at the scene of any significant fire related incident and acts as a Co-ordination Centre for all responding agencies on site.

The CSU also acts as a focal point in applying the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) to ensure a structured multi-agency response to an emergency is communicated and coordinated and ensures the recovery phase to the event can commence at the earliest possible stage.



Pictured left to right NIFRS Watch commander Richard Mortimore, Martin Daly Derry City and Strabane Council Emergency Planning Officer, David Doherty Commander operations NIFRS (western area), Damian Gavin, Northern EPG Emergency Co-coordinator, Denise McDonnell Leas Assurance Officer Derry City and Strabane Council, Alan Hutton, PSNI Superintendent, (EPG Co-Chair) and Rory Donnelly Licensing and Emergency Planning Manager Causeway Coast and Glens Council.

Keeping Traffic Moving Safely in Winter

DfI aims to help traffic on main roads move safely in wintry conditions by spreading salt at the most effective times.

Staff are on standby 24 hours a day to monitor and react according to the ongoing weather conditions. DfI focuses its resources on important routes carrying over 80% of traffic:

- Main through routes carrying more than 1,500 vehicles per day
- Other busy through routes carrying more than 1,000 vehicles per day may be included if there are difficult circumstances
- Special allowance is made for school and other buses using a weighting factor, e.g. a 40-seater bus is counted as 40 vehicles
- Links to small settlements (100 dwellings or more) via the shortest route to the main salted road



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- Special arrangements are in place for rural schools that face particular difficulties
- All other routes are normally not salted

Around 5,000 salt boxes and 50,000 salt piles are provided to communities across Northern Ireland on a self-help basis, on routes not included on the salting schedule. These are refilled as quickly as

possible, however at busy times, available resources will be directed to treating priority roads. An assessment is required by officials for all new locations.

DfI does not normally salt footways but, where resources permit, will work with councils during prolonged periods of snow and ice to clear footways in busy town centres.

People often ask if, legally, they can clear snow and ice. The fact is there's no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice on the footway outside your home or from public spaces. In 2010, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland advised that if you clear snow or ice carefully, you are unlikely to be held liable.

Commercial property owners in particular should make sure that they have adequate supplies of salt in place to ensure the

safety of employees and visitors. Unfortunately, DfI cannot issue salt to members of the public at roads depots, largely because these are workplaces with heavy vehicles turning and reversing.

You can report an issue with ice or snow, request a new salt box or grit pile, or refilling of an existing salt box on the nidirect website.

[Report an issue with ice or snow](#)

Getting Ready for Winter

Northern Ireland Electricity Networks has launched their 'Preparing for Winter' campaign calling on domestic and business customers across Northern Ireland to make preparations ahead of winter.



NIE Networks is working continuously to ensure the resilience and performance of the electricity network, but still wants customers to think ahead as supply can be affected by natural events, with severe winter weather potentially causing significant damage.

Trevor Harron, Network Operations Manager for NIE Networks, wants to ensure every customer is winter ready, particularly those who are more vulnerable or reliant on power.

"Our ongoing investment is ensuring the network continues to perform to the high standard our customers expect as well as making sure we are as storm ready as possible. Preparation is still important though and we particularly want customers within the agricultural industry, rural communities and those who have critical healthcare needs, to take the necessary steps to ensure that any duration of power cut is manageable."

The 'Preparing for Winter' campaign provides a power cut checklist including top tips such as locating your trip switch, knowing your unique customer number, stocking up on battery powered lights and having the NIE Networks Customer Helpline number **03457 643 643** to hand.

Powercheck on the NIE Networks website is another excellent resource for providing customers with reliable and real time information about a power cut and the status of restoration.

Those customers who are dependent on life supporting medical equipment are encouraged to apply to the NIE Networks Medical Customer Care Register to receive regular information during a power cut.

For further information about what you can do to prepare for winter or to access Powercheck please visit www.nienetworks.co.uk



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During spells of severe cold, it is possible for water pipes in your home to freeze. This may lead to a burst pipe when the thaw sets in, which can cause damage to your home and belongings.

The Housing Executive has some simple precautions to take to reduce the risk, or deal with burst pipes.

Our Streets Ahead magazine is delivered to tenants in our 85,000 homes, featuring tips and advice on winter-readiness including: avoiding frozen pipes; what to do if a pipe freezes; and information on what to do if a pipe bursts.

Guidance on preparing for winter weather can also be found on the Housing Help section of the Housing Executive website and our social media channels where you can find handy 'how to' videos with step-by-step guidance on what to do if your pipes freeze or how to find your stopcock to turn off your cold water supply.

It is important to remember that others in your area may be feeling the effects of bad weather, and some people may be anxious or feel isolated. Try to stay in contact with your neighbours and help out if you can.

If your water supply fails, there may be a burst pipe in your home, or a leak in the mains system outside your home. If you think it is a mains problem, call NI Water on **03457 440 088** or email waterline@niwater.com

Weather the Winter and Lower Your Energy Costs

The winter weather is upon us, which means we are using more energy to heat and light our homes.

With this in mind, The Consumer Council is encouraging households to be more energy efficient this winter. Follow these top tips to reduce your winter energy bills:

Shop around for a cheaper energy supplier

The Consumer Council has a free, impartial Energy Price Comparison Tool available online at www.consumercouncil.org.uk/energy/energy-price-comparison, which can help you to find a better energy deal.

Plan your appliance usage if you're on Economy 7

If you're on Economy 7, then you can save money by using

large appliances at night time.

Don't stand by and let standby cost you money

Turn off your TVs, games consoles and computers when they're not in use, it is important not to leave them in standby mode.

Maximise the efficiency of your appliances

Make sure to fill your dishwasher or washing machine before putting it on. The fuller the load, the more efficient the cycle. This is especially useful at Christmas time when you might have people over.

Get more out of your oven

Leave your oven door open after cooking to let the heat warm your kitchen or dining area.

Take the efficiency of your festive lights to new heights

Make the switch to more efficient LED Christmas lights and turn off room lights

when the tree is lit. Also, remember to turn off the festive lights before going to bed or consider purchasing an automatic timer for your plug sockets.

The Consumer Council has a range of resources to help consumers save money on their energy bills. Copies of all resources and guides are available to download from www.consumercouncil.org.uk or by contacting us on **0800 121 6022** or via [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/consumer.council) or [Twitter](https://twitter.com/consumer.council).



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Helping residents prepare for emergencies

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Emergency Planning and Community Resilience has been working in partnership with local older people's charity, Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership, to provide local residents with information on how to prepare for emergencies.

Emergency Radio Network for NI

Local government emergency planners have partnered with the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET), to develop an exciting new emergency radio network across Northern Ireland.

RAYNET UK was formed in 1953, following the severe east coast flooding in England, to provide support to communities and organisations that have lost vital communications. RAYNET is a very professional support organisation, recognised by Cabinet Office and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat.

RAYNET has provided additional communications at major incidents involving aircraft, trains, flooding, evacuations, telephone exchange failures, missing person's searches, adverse weather and oil/chemical pollution. The terms of RAYNET's amateur radio licence permits them to pass messages on behalf of the emergency services, local authorities, government departments, utilities and voluntary organisations.



John McCullagh from RAYNET NI with Seamus McBride and Davy Neill from Belfast City Council Emergency Planning.

The emergency network being developed in Northern Ireland for district councils and their partners will be used in situations where normal communications, such as landlines and mobile phones, have failed. This will enable emergency response partners to be more resilient and effective. It will also bring major benefits when providing support to communities affected by major infrastructure issues such as power and telecommunications failures.

The statutory agencies, along with voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland, work together in three multi-agency forums called Emergency

Preparedness Groups (EPGs), namely Northern EPG, Southern EPG and Belfast EPG.

Belfast City Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, along with RAYNET volunteers, have been spearheading the project on behalf of the three EPGs. Emergency radio communications have been tested for the Belfast area and across the province into the Fermanagh and Omagh area with excellent results.

It is anticipated that other areas will come on board in the near future to enable the emergency radio network coverage to extend right across the province.



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Local older people are being provided with information on: emergency phone numbers, how to sign up for critical care registers, ideas for emergency grab packs and much more. These messages are being distributed through three local 'Good Morning' services across Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus.

The Good Morning services are a free community service, offering telephone befriending to older people up to five mornings per week.

The calls support older people at risk of loneliness to build new friendships. Good Morning calls also act as a support and alert service, helping older people remain independent and confident living in their own homes, while providing a connection to other vital local services. Last year, in Mid and East Antrim, volunteers made more than 70,000 Good Morning calls to 534 members.

To sign up for this service please ring: **028 2564 0720** (Ballymena), **028 2827 3362** (Larne) or **028 9332 6000** (Carrickfergus).

Atlantic Areas Floods Project

With the incidence and impact of flooding increasing across the world, and this trend set to continue, the Atlantic Areas Floods project (AA Floods) aims to reduce human and material damages through enhanced prevention, warning, co-ordination and emergency management tools.

Financed by the European Regional Development Fund via the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme 2014-2020, a main objective is to strengthen integrated territorial development and co-operation.

Comprising nine partners across five EU members states, the main AA Floods outputs are:

- Guidelines to achieve better co-ordination between territorial, urban and risk management planning.
- Pilot regulations and tools for enhanced design of sanitation networks, based on modelling torrential rains run-off and networks evacuation.
- Models for local emergency plans against floods to reduce human and material losses through Local Scale Flood Risks Management.
- Guide to implement a rivers overflow monitoring system for

early warning.

- Protocol for reservoirs' management to plan, manage and co-ordinate water discharges.
- Enhanced co-ordination protocols for improvement in rapid response to flood events.

The British Red Cross is assisting with analysis of flood policies, planning, development of community action plans, enhanced effectiveness of crisis management and co-ordination with emergency bodies at local and regional levels (including evacuation, assistance and recovery).

They will also incorporate the European Commission funded 'Creating Resilience in Urban Areas' project into standardised community resilience toolkits, which can be disseminated nationally and where capacity and capabilities can be built at local scales.



Training will be provided to partners and community groups, and they will share best practice in community engagement and to increasing preparedness and resilience across five member states.

Further information can be found at:

www.atlanticarea.eu

www.aafloods.eu



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Met Office Technology Used to Track Hurricanes

Hurricanes form in the tropical Atlantic, in an area between the Azores and the Caribbean Sea.

The track of the storms can vary greatly, some moving into the Gulf of Mexico and others moving north along the eastern seaboard of the United States.

The UK Met Office global computer model, widely regarded as the best in the world, is used, among others by the National Hurricane Centre in

Miami to help forecast where the eyes of these storms are likely to go and where the greatest impacts and danger to life are to be expected.

The path of Hurricane Dorian in September, which is estimated to have caused well over \$8 billion dollars' worth of damage, was accurately forecast by the Met Office global model. This allowed early, advanced preparations and evacuations in the Bahamas.

Sadly, despite this, around 70 people lost their lives in what was described as the worst storm ever to strike the

islands. It was the joint most powerful hurricane to make landfall along with the Labour Day storm of 1935 - before storms were named.

Occasionally, storms which start as hurricanes in the Atlantic can move towards the British Isles during the autumn. They are then referred to as ex-hurricanes - such as Ex-hurricane Ophelia in 2017 or Ex-hurricane Lorenzo in October 2019.

They can still cause high winds and heavy rain but, because sea temperatures around the north Atlantic are lower, they thankfully lose

most of the devastating power they possess in the Americas. Lorenzo weakened into a normal wet and windy Atlantic depression as it approached Donegal.

North Atlantic storms, capable of causing significant impacts in the British Isles, are named by the Met Office and Met Eireann. For the 2019-20 winter season, the Dutch Met Office has joined our storm naming project. Since we use names which reflect the countries involved, don't be surprised to hear a few Dutch names such as Atiyah or Gerda being mentioned this year!



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“BeReadyNI”

The month of September marked National Preparedness Month.

Across Northern Ireland, emergency services and other organisations that are involved in responding to emergencies highlighted information available to the public via social media about being better prepared to deal with a variety of emergencies.

The Campaign called “ BeReadyNI” ran throughout the month with Met Office, Consumer Council, NI Electricity Networks, Emergency Services, Public Health Agency,

Councils, Translink, Red Cross, Coastguard and the Health and Safety Executive all participating to provide simple advice to the public on how best to respond to various situations.

A lot of the information provided can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaign/be-ready-for-emergencies. This useful site provides advice, information and practical tips for individuals, households, communities and businesses to ensure they can cope with an emergency situation, if it arises.



Check your flood risk at Flood Maps (NI)

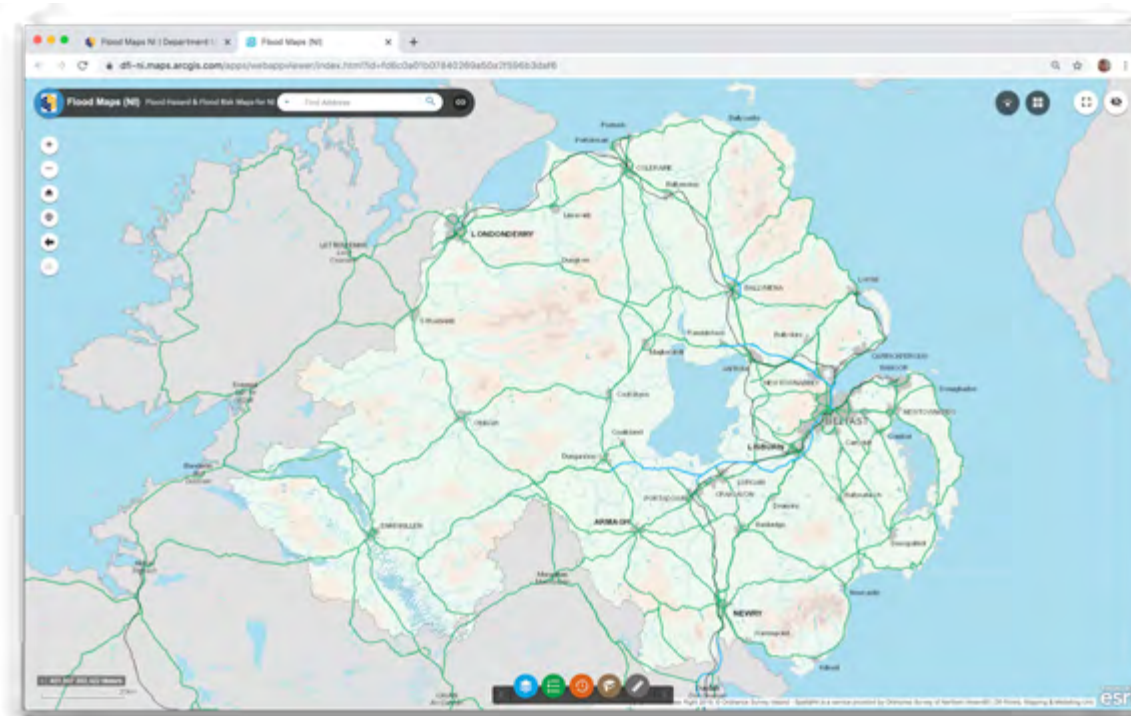
You can check the latest available flood hazard information for your property on the Department for Infrastructure's website.

Flood Maps (NI) is an interactive map-viewer that highlights areas throughout Northern Ireland (NI) that are prone to flooding and its potential adverse impacts. The Flood Maps can be accessed by the following link: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/rivers-and-flooding/flood-maps-ni

Strategic flood maps of NI were first published by DfI Rivers in November 2008, to provide an indication of the general areas in NI that may be prone to flooding from rivers and the sea. A strategic surface water flood map was subsequently published in December 2011.

Strategic flood maps are not considered to be sufficiently accurate to determine the flood risk to a particular property or specific point location, but they highlight the general areas and communities that are potentially at risk of flooding.

Following completion of a [Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment for NI in](#)



2011 (PFRA), more detailed flood mapping was produced for 69 areas in Northern Ireland considered to be most at risk. This detailed mapping was incorporated into Flood Maps NI and areas where such mapping has been done can be viewed in Flood Maps NI layers under 'Floods Directive 1st cycle' as 'SFRA'. Detailed maps are suitable for determining the level of risk to individual properties and specific point locations. For geographical areas that are not covered by detailed mapping, strategic

flood mapping continues to be displayed in Flood Maps NI.

The EU Floods Directive requires the Department to review the PFRA for NI every 6 years. This latest [NI Flood Risk Assessment \(NIFRA\)](#) was completed by the Department in December 2018. It identifies 45 areas of flood risk in NI, 12 of which are considered to be Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFR). These areas can be viewed in Flood Maps NI layers under 'Floods Directive 2nd cycle' as 'APSFR'

and 'TAPSFR' (Transitional Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk). The NIFRA differs from the PFRA in that the flood mapping takes into account the presence of flood defences which protect certain areas from flooding. Surface water flood risk has also been assessed in the NIFRA.

A review of the Flood Hazard and Flood Risk Maps for these 12 Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk will be completed by December 2019.



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No matter how prepared we are for inclement weather, there's always the chance of an emergency at home. Here's a list of phone numbers you might find useful should the unforeseen happen:

Emergency Services:
999 or 112

Housing Executive:
03448 920 901

Northern Ireland
Electricity Networks:
03457 643643

NI Gas Emergency Service:
0800 002 001

NI Water Waterline:
03457 440088

Flooding Incident Line:
0300 2000 100

For advice and information on dealing with emergencies visit:
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/
be-ready-for-emergencies](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies)

Problems with Roads & Streets:
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/
information-and-services/
travel-transport-and-roads/
problems-roads-and-streets](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets)

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Regional Community
Resilience Group

The Regional Community Resilience Group Newsletter aims to keep its members up to date on getting weather ready.

Partner Organisations:



The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) was formed in 2013 to help local communities prepare for and respond to weather related emergencies.

The group brings together Multi-Agency Partner Organisations from government, utilities and the voluntary sector to work for and with Communities at Risk of Severe Weather.

The RCRG aims to provide a forum to facilitate co-ordination, communication, partnership working and capacity building on community resilience issues. The group is currently working with around 26 communities across Northern Ireland ready to inform and resource

them and improve preparedness and community resilience measures.

Unfortunately, severe weather events will continue to occur but through good communication, accessible, reliable information and established practical measures, communities can and have applied self-help measures to reduce impacts and protect property.

This newsletter will be used to highlight important developments to enhance community resilience, provide an opportunity for communities to share experiences to the benefit of others and highlight key responder contacts to help readers to **Get Weather Ready!**



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