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This publication is available in other
formats on request

 Consumer Council Northern Ireland

 ConsumerCouncil

Transport

Bus, rail, ferry and air services can be disrupted in bad weather. You can be prepared by:

- Calling the service provider directly (e.g. Translink) or visiting its website, twitter and facebook pages before travelling;
- Getting free copies of the Consumer Council's 'Plain Sailing' and 'Plane Facts' travel guides. Those with mobility issues can also get a copy of our 'Access to Air Travel' guide.

If your flight is delayed by two hours or more due to bad weather:

- You are entitled to free meals / refreshments, calls, e-mails, overnight accomodation if necessary.

If your flight is cancelled due to bad weather:

- You can choose between a refund or another flight. If you choose another flight you are entitled to the same assistance as delayed passengers while you wait.

Christmas shopping

Christmas can be very expensive. The cost of food has risen by over 20 per cent in the last year and we can overspend on presents by about £174. You can be prepared by:

- Writing a grocery list before you go;
- Putting a limit on your presents list and sticking to it;
- Getting a receipt for ALL payments you make into a Christmas savings club;
- Getting the Consumer Council's free Christmas Budget Planner. Call us for a free copy or download from our website;
- You have added protection if you pay by credit card for a single item over £100;

- When shopping online look for **https** at the beginning of website addresses (the 's' stands for 'secure') and check for a **padlock** icon once you get to the payments section;
- Check the returns policy of the shop in which you are buying goods. Keep all receipts and consider getting a 'gift receipt' for any presents you buy;
- Treat gift vouchers as cash and always check the expiry date;
- You have the same rights online as you do on the high street, i.e. if goods are faulty or don't fit the description given you may be entitled to a repair, replacement or refund. You also have seven working days to cancel most orders and ask for a full refund.



Contacts

NI Water / Waterline (24/7) – 08457 440088 (also Text Relay Service) or www.niwater.com

SNIPEF – 0845 224 0391 or www.needaplumber.org

NIE – 08457 643 643 (minicom 08457 147 128) or www.nie.co.uk

Phoenix Supply Ltd – 0845 900 5253 (minicom 028 9055 5801) or www.phoenixsupplyni.com

firmus energy – 08456 08 00 88 (minicom/textphone 08456 03 10 08) or www.firmusenergy.co.uk

Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001

Gas Safe Register – www.gassaferegister.co.uk/learn/winter_gas_safety_tips.aspx

* NIE, NI Water, Phoenix Supply and firmus energy have Care Registers / Schemes to provide additional services to those who need help or who rely on water or energy e.g. for health reasons. To be added to these Registers contact them via numbers / websites above (note NIE Critical Care is at www.nie.co.uk/customerinformation/customerinfo.htm.)

Translink – www.translink.co.uk or 028 9066 6630. twitter (@Translink_NI), facebook (facebook.com/TranslinkNI)

Weather the Winter

Tips and advice for Christmas and winter



The Consumer Council

Water

You can help avoid frozen and burst pipes by:

- Insulating pipes and tanks in unheated areas. Materials cost from 50p a metre;
- Knowing where your stop tap/valve is and how to turn it off (usually under the kitchen sink, in a downstairs bathroom or cloakroom);
- Fixing dripping taps and getting boiler serviced regularly;
- Writing down contact details of a few qualified plumbers. See Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation (SNIPEF) overleaf;
- Watching NI Water's video at www.niwater.com/winterfreeze.asp

- Leaving a key with a friend/family if you go away. If you go away for a long time turn off the stop tap/valve and consider emptying your water tank completely.

Check your home insurance policy covers severe weather and keep your policy in a secure place.

If your pipes freeze:

- Turn off water at the stop tap/valve;
- Thaw the pipe starting nearest the tap. Wrap warm cloths/hot water bottles around it or use a hairdryer at lowest setting. Don't heat the pipe too quickly or use a naked flame;
- Don't leave taps dripping or running as pipes below may be frozen.

If your pipes burst:

- Turn off the stop tap/valve;
- Block escaping water with towels;
- Turn ON all your taps to reduce flooding;
- Call a qualified plumber;
- When pipe is fixed turn OFF all your taps;
- If you have checked your pipes and they are not frozen or burst, and you still have no water, contact NI Water (see Contacts section).



Electricity

Electricity Power Cut

A power cut can happen at any time. You can be prepared by:

- Knowing where your household fuses and trip switches are;
- Having a torch, oil or gas lamp (all preferable to candles) ready and easy to reach;
- Having a supply of formula baby milk and preparing a flask of hot water to heat bottles and baby food.

If your electricity goes off:

- Check if your neighbours have lost supply. If you can, check on vulnerable neighbours to make sure they are ok;
- If your power is off and you want more information, contact NIE (see Contacts section). Have a bill to hand as you will need your customer number;

- Check appliances and machinery are switched off at the wall;
- Leave one light on so you know when power is restored.

When your electricity comes back on:

- Turn on and reset appliances (e.g. timers, water heater, burglar alarm).

Gas

- Get your appliances serviced every year by a Gas Safe-registered engineer and if you smell gas call the Gas Emergency Service, (see Contacts).
- Use our gas and electricity price comparison tools to see if switching supplier could save you money www.consumercouncil.org.uk/energy/price-comparison/

Oil

You may need to order more oil during winter. Be prepared by:

- Checking your oil tank regularly;
- Using our online oil price checker to find the cheapest and dearest oil in your area www.consumercouncil.org.uk/oil-price-watch/
- Considering delivery time as well as overall price;
- Checking if your local council offers an oil stamps saving scheme as this can help you budget for oil throughout the year.

Please be aware that emergency oil drums are often three times the price (per litre) of a regular fill.