

OUR NEW EMERGENCY HANDBOOK

# Dunphys

THE 'WHAT TO DO'  
EMERGENCY HANDBOOK



## **Our Number One Rule: Don't Panic.**

When it comes to emergencies, we are on call 24 hours a day - ready to support, guide and advise you. **To be clear, emergencies constitute any matter that can't wait until the next day.**

In many cases we will advise your sub-tenant(s) but, except in acute emergencies we will refer them to you as we prefer to have your authorisation for repairs/fault reports.

If the problem is inside the flat, it will be your Letting Agent who holds your money to spend on repairs inside your property.

**Remember our contractual relationship as per the Lease, is with you, the owner.**

What's important to remember is that service charges you pay are not for spending on work inside yours or other people's properties.

**Flat Leases** - require the owner to maintain and repair what's inside their property. That includes contents, carpets, fixtures and fittings, pipes and wires. These cannot be repaired/replaced/maintained using service charges.

**Houses** - check the Transfer as there will be restrictions, for example, against making external changes or perhaps the colour the outside can be painted. All repairs are your responsibility.

Below are the protocols for common problems. This includes information regarding how we can help and also provides suggestions for those issues when you are required to organise repairs and further works.

We are continually striving to improve when it comes to communication with leaseholders & residents, everyday efficiencies and across all company operations. If you feel we have omitted any information that you might feel relevant, please don't hesitate to be in touch with us so we can make the relevant revisions for future handbooks.

Lastly, our team is here to help. If you still require any guidance following your perusal of this handbook, please don't hesitate to give our office a ring on **020 8577 5172** - even out of hours (in cases of emergencies).



**Eitan Freilich**

Director



## PHONE

Our office is open for accounts queries 9am - 5:30pm Mon-Fri.

Pop us a call on 020 8577 5172.



## EMAIL

Send us an email [enquiries@dunphys.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@dunphys.co.uk)  
We aim to respond to all email enquiries within 3 working days.



## POST

Send us a letter to either our Hounslow or London address and we aim to respond within 7 working days. Details can be found on our website: [www.dunphys.co.uk](http://www.dunphys.co.uk)

## Gas, Electrical & Lighting Problems:

If you smell gas then call free on **0800 111 999** immediately. For properties with no communal heating, the gas supply will belong to your individual property.

In properties with communal heating, we will act immediately on your behalf by calling the Gas Board and if necessary getting the boiler maintenance contractor on site.

---

In the event of complete electrical failure please first check with the National Grid. It's probably a power cut due to failure of a sector on the national grid. For high voltage, overhead cables or substation emergencies, call **0800 40 40 90**. Otherwise the national grid is split into regions <http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/>

**Check your region and choose the relevant emergency number from below:**

CE electric UK - North east - **0800 668877** / Yorkshire - **0800 375675**

E ON central networks - Eastern region - **0800 056 8090**

E ON central networks - Western region - **0800 328 1111**

Western power distribution - **0800 0520400**

UK power networks - London - **0800 028 0247**

UK power networks - East - **0800 783 8838**

UK power networks - South East - **0800 783 8866**

Scottish and Southern Energy - **0800 0727282**

*Once you've ruled out the National Grid, check it is not just you. If it is just you, it's probably either an unpaid bill/fuse board problem in your property.*

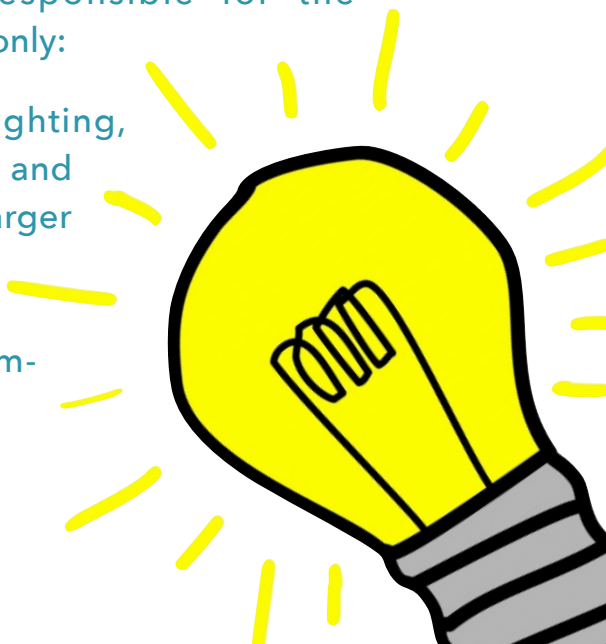
If all the lights are out in the common parts and all properties at your site, but not the whole street, then in-take circuit failure could be the cause. For new build properties in a street of old build properties, this is most likely a sector failure of the National Grid.

Once all this has been ruled out, and if it's an **internal circuit failure, this is an emergency**, so you'll need to call us on 020 8577 5172.

Light bulbs out are **not an emergency** if there is sufficient background lighting. However we will try to re-schedule the usual cleaning visit to ensure the bulb is replaced quickly. Timers needing adjustment are **not emergencies** and a call-out will be scheduled the next day or as soon as possible. Because most external lighting is controlled by timer switches or photocell sensors, faults can often only be spotted at night. If so, just let us know the next day.

Generally, Dunphys is responsible for the communal electricity supply only:

i.e. the common parts lighting, external grounds lighting and street lighting in some larger sites. If street lights are out, you can report this on [www.gov.uk/report-problem-street-light](http://www.gov.uk/report-problem-street-light).



# Water Issues:

With complete water failure, it's hugely unlikely that Dunphys or our contractors would shut down the water supply unless we've written letters to everyone telling them we need to do this for maintenance reasons.

## What you need to do:

1. find out if it's just you, ask your neighbours if they have water.
2. if all properties have no water, then check the local water authority, they've probably shut down the mains in the street for emergency maintenance.

If it's winter and your neighbours have water, your pipes are probably frozen. Frozen pipes are more common in older buildings where there are water tanks and pipes on the roof or where the water table is high and pipes are not laid very deep and ground freeze is a problem. So:

- Locate your main stop cock (usually under the sink or where water supply enters your property);
- Turn off the stop cock to minimise problems when your pipes thaw;
- Turn off water in-lets to any immersion tanks, boilers, header tanks so as not to cause damage by sucking dirt into appliances;
- Borrow some water from your neighbours or buy in water from a shop and wait until the pipes naturally unfreeze.

*Because when water turns to ice it expands, when the pipe thaws, it may start to leak, so watch carefully.*

## Here's a list of 24 hour Emergency Numbers for the water authorities:

- Anglian Water (Lincoln) - **08457 145 145**
- Bristol Water PLC (Bristol) - **0117 966 5881**
- Cambridge Water Company (Cambridge) - **01223 706050**
- Dee Valley Water (North Wales) - **0197 884 6946**
- Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig (Welsh Water) - **0800 052 0130**
- Essex and Suffolk Water (Essex and Suffolk) - **0845 782 0999**
- Northumbrian Water (Northumbria) - **0845 717 1100**
- Portsmouth Water (Portsmouth) - **023 9247 7999**
- Sembcorp Bournemouth Water Ltd (Bournemouth) - **01202 590059**
- Severn Trent Water Ltd (Coventry) - **0800 783 4444**
- South East Water Limited (Kent) - **0845 602 1724**
- South Staffordshire Water PLC (South Staffordshire) - **0800 24 33 52**
- South West Water Limited (Exeter) - **0800 169 1144**
- Southern Water Services (Sussex) - **0845 278 0845**
- Sutton and East Surrey Water (Sutton and east surrey) - **0173 777 2000**
- Thames Water Utilities Ltd (Swindon) - **0800 714 614**
- United utilities (Warrington) - **0800 330 033**
- Veolia Water (Herefordshire) - **020 782 3333**
- Veolia Water (Essex) - **0845 1489299**
- Veolia Water (Kent) - **0845 888 5 888**
- Wessex water (Bath) - **0800 692 0692**
- Yorkshire Water (Yorkshire) - **0800 573 553**

## SMOKE, CARBON MONOXIDE AND HEAT DETECTORS

Don't forget the **law** requires that a **smoke alarm** is fitted on every storey of a property, and that a **CO alarm** is fitted in any room with a solid fuel burning appliance.

Please also note that **heat detectors** are not a replacement for smoke alarms.

If you have any questions, please call our office: 020 8577 5172



## Mains Water Inlet Pipe Leaks:

The rising mains water pipe is a service charge matter until it branches off to individual properties serving that property exclusively. Individual pipes are the relevant property owners' responsibility.

Mains water leaks are **always an emergency**, please phone us day or night. The water pressure will cause them to worsen with the added risk the pipe joint could burst. We will always help in an emergency, but the cost of repair, depending on which part of the pipe is involved, may be recharged to you.

## Leak From An Appliance Within Your Flat:

Find the stopcock and isolate either the faulty appliance – in-let pipes to WC's, washing machine and other appliances. These usually have an isolator valve that can be turned off with a screwdriver. Isolate the appliance and call us on **020 8577 5172** in the morning.

### Or

Find the mains water stopcock which is usually in 1 of 4 places:

1. under the kitchen sink
2. in a riser cupboard either inside or outside the front door to the property
3. in a box on the wall outside the building
4. in a box in the grass/front garden outside the building



## Waste Pipes Leaks:

Waste pipes are **not an emergency**. A waste pipe is your responsibility until the point where the pipe becomes shared. For example, the bath and toilet waste are the property owner's responsibility until the waste pipe becomes vertical and other owners waste pipes join it. Shared pipes are a service charge matter.

It's not easy to know for sure where a problem starts from. So as your Managing Agent, in emergency situations we can step in. We'll need your help to knock on neighbour's doors and you to pass the phone to them so we can question and assess what action should be taken. Sometimes we'll have to decide to send a contractor and resolve the liability issue later - and, if it's your pipe you will get recharged.

### The steps you should take are: -

1. Liaise with your neighbour to find out where and when the leak was a problem.  
This provides clues i.e. did you have a shower or bath at this time?
2. Do not use the appliance until a plumber has mended it and the problem is solved.
3. If you get no response from your neighbour, you should isolate the leaking appliance by turning off the water. Some pipe taps look like these shown here, so you may need a screwdriver.

*Waste pipe leaks are not an emergency but you'll be responsible for the damage caused from your appliance not being in repair.*

## Overflow Leaks:

Leaking overflows are **not an emergency**, but need to be addressed quickly as they cause considerable damage to the fabric of the building. The risks are higher in Victorian buildings where construction methods mean there are timbers hidden behind the brickwork and modern timber framed buildings as wet, then dry rot can take hold.

For overflow pipes (toilets, boilers etc.) because these serve just your appliances, they are your responsibility. You should be able to listen and hear the water of what's malfunctioning continually running. If you're on a water meter you're wasting lots of money!

**There's lots of reasons why you should act early on a leaking overflow, here's a few:**

1. Overflows only leak when there's something wrong, it's a malfunction signal.
2. An appliance's lifespan will reduce if the overflow is not fixed.
3. The longer you leave it, repairs are likely to cost more.
4. Because you'll be responsible for cleaning salt and green stains to walls, act quickly and you save this cost.
5. If it is the toilet, a handyman may just need to adjust the ball valve in the cistern.

## Roof Leaks:

Roof leaks, although a great worry, are **not an emergency**. Contractors can't walk on roofs in the dark, at night. We'll advise you to use a bucket/towel to collect water overnight and we'll arrange a contractor the next day.

For your safety you must turn off all electrics in the room(s) affected and not turn them on again until the area has dried out.

If there is a roof leak, call **020 8577 5172** in the morning as we can't send people on the roof at night.

## Drainage Problems:

We only treat drain leakage as an out-of-hours **emergency if live sewage is seeping**. In which case we will call a drainage company to assist.

Most drain blockages can be prevented by not putting the following down the drain:

- Physical obstructions (nappies, baby wipes, sanitary towels);
- Excessive cooking fat (restaurants can be a suspect);
- Solid food waste in the drain (especially rice and tea leaves).

**Rarely, there's a serious problem, for example:**

- Collapse of the drainage system

*If you're unsure we'll help you diagnose the problem.*

# The Boiler & Central Heating Leaks:

Because the system can be isolated **these leaks are not an emergency.**

If you have your own boiler/heating system the system (boiler, heat exchanger, water heater, immersion tank, header tank, radiators, valves, pipe work & overflow) it's your responsibility to keep it in repair as only you benefit from the heat. If disrepair causes damage to your neighbour you will have to bear the cost of repairs.

We recommend you get a British Gas heating service plan. We will not always recommend a plumber because it's best to check the instruction manual as ideally you'll need a specialist in the system you have installed.

Leaks to a private heating system are rarely an emergency because once the system is empty of water the leak will stop. To minimise damage and empty the system quickly and safely you should:

1. Turn off the boiler filling loop to stop new water entering the system.
2. Find the drain valve and empty the water in the pipes and radiators collecting the water in a bowl or using a hose pipe. This reduces pressure on the leaking valve/pipe/radiator and minimises damage.
3. The system should not be used until a specialist has made repairs.

Leaks to a mega flow or water tank are **rarely an emergency** because once the tank is empty of water, the leak will stop. To minimise damage and empty the system quickly and safely you should

1. turn off the cold water inlet pipe;
2. turn on all taps to empty the system, after step 1, else you'll just draw new water through;
3. The system should not be used until a specialist has made repairs.

## **Communal Heating Systems:**

Communal heating system leaks **are an emergency**, please phone us day or night. In a communal system **please do not touch** any part of the system as this could invalidate elements of the heating engineer's maintenance contract. If your radiator or valve is leaking or you are remodelling your property and want to move a radiator this must be organised through us. Radiators cannot be changed without draining the system down or freezing the pipes. Where possible please plan your work in the summer season when the pumps are not pumping hot water around the building.

*Report communal heating failure to the Concierge Desk (if applicable) or call us on **020 8577 5172**.*

# Leaks into your property from a property above:

## If you discover water, here's what you should do: -

1. Put a bucket under the leak.
2. Turn off all electrics in and around the area where the leak is.
3. Knock on your neighbours door, see if they are in so you can show them the leak, find out what they've recently used (bath, shower, washing machine etc).
4. See if it's possible to shut off water to the faulty appliance, i.e. a stopcock you can turn off until they arrange a plumber to fix the fault.
5. If there's no in-line stop cock then usually there's a stop cock or tap to turn off the water near where the supply first enters the property (often under the kitchen sink).
6. If there's no stop cock or tap there in modern buildings you may find a mains water isolator valve in a riser cupboard near your front door.
7. Appliances must not be re-used until fixed, this includes showers where seals need re-sealing or tiles re-grouting.
8. If you've got appliance/leaks insurance cover such as that provided by British Gas etc. that's what the policy is for.
9. Call your preferred plumber.

## How can Dunphys helps?

If the leak continues after your neighbour has turned their water off, call us on **020 8577 5172** and we'll help decide if it's mains pressure and decide what to do.

Out of hours we'll help establish which property/which room the leak is coming from.

We'll need owners and residents to help us by knocking on doors to see if neighbours are in. Then we'll ask questions to try to establish the source and understand the severity.

We can call out a contractor, but only when we've got access to the property above.

Firstly we'll ask you to put a bucket under the leak, and then we'll phone you back a little later to see how much water you've collected.

We do have to recharge the owner of the pipe or appliance that caused any damage, unless at the point of the leak, the pipe proves to be a pipe serving several properties.

**NOTE: Only Mains Pressure Leaks Are An Emergency**

### **How do I know if it's a mains pressure leak?**

Put a bucket under the leak, if it fills up in minutes and water is gushing it is probably a mains pressure leak. If it takes 20 or so minutes to fill up a bucket it is probably not.

### **After the leak has stopped, how do I go about repairs?**

Most costs will be insured, however, remedial work inside your property is your responsibility. The good news is that there is buildings insurance to help you recover most costs (usually costs of remedial works but not repair of the pipe that leaked).

*Continued on next page.*

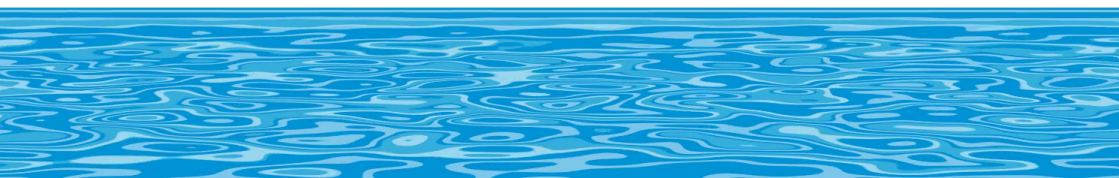
You'll need to arrange quotes. You'll need to choose contractor(s) you trust or want to do works inside your property. Most insurers ask for at least 2 quotes before they approve your insurance claim. You'll need to sign an insurance claim form and get it and the quotes to the insurer.

Wait for authorisation! You should not instruct the works until

- A. you've submitted an insurance claim and
- B. been advised what of the remedial works you are claiming for are authorised

Don't pay the contractor until you are happy - It's your flat and you'll need to sign off the repair/redecoration works. Do tell the contractor the job is an insurance claim as unless you want to pay them in advance, you'll need to wait for the insurance cheque before you pay the contractor.

**For mains pressure leaks,** if a neighbour is not in we will call the fire brigade who will turn off the water hopefully at a stopcock outside the flat, otherwise the fire brigade will force entry to cut off the water supply and then we'll arrange a locksmith to secure the property.





## Lift Failure:

Modern lifts should be provided with a lift phone. This should connect you to the lift company. If there is no lift phone and someone is stuck **call 999**.

Few lift maintenance contracts provide for night time hour call outs, so the priority is getting the trapped person out and an engineer booked for the next day. **Please call our office after phoning for emergency services.**

If you have housebound or elderly neighbours please take the time to see if they need any emergency provisions.

## Fire Alarm & Fire Exit Windows:

Each building differs but in general, if the fire alarm sounds you must phone **999**, even if there is no apparent fire. After the Fire Brigade have declared the building safe, you may re-enter.

If there is a phone number and contact details on the alarm panel, then the alarm company need to be called as an engineer will need to test and reset the system. If you need help with the fire alarm company call us on **020 8577 5172**.

Do liaise with us as many fire alarms trigger roof vent windows to open and we need to know as the fire exit windows may need re-setting too.

## Vehicle / Pedestrian Gate Failure:

In order to avoid unnecessary costs (particularly if the gate doesn't have a maintenance contract), it is useful to understand that gates tend to fail for the following reasons:

- Infra red beam cannot get a clear line of vision to the sensor panel (horizontally vertical sensor point). Perhaps there's dirt/grease on the sensor panel. To save an unnecessary call out, try wiping the sensor clean with a cloth.
- Power failure - this should cause gates to automatically stay open until such time the mechanisms are re-set.
- Motor malfunction - this usually means the gates open and shut irrationally or seize up in an irregular position. Gates should have a red (emergency release) button, or a wind handle to manually override the system. The priority is to get the gates left open. We'll talk you through it but finding the emergency over-ride can save expensive out of hours call-outs.

So long as gates are stuck open, this is **not an emergency** and a next day call out will be arranged.

## Gates emergencies include when the gate:

- Is stuck shut, we can call the fire brigade to force the gates open for fire safety evacuation reasons.
- If the gates are 'opening & shutting' continually we can arrange for the power supply to be isolated and the gates to be left open by calling out an electrician.

## Intercom System Failure:

Whilst this is a nuisance, it's **not an emergency**. Please let us know during working hours and we'll arrange for an engineer to make an appointment with you.

## Locks Failure/Security Issues:

With your communal front door key, if it's not working, it's **only an emergency** if everybody else's is not working too.

Please get your neighbours to see if their keys are okay before calling us. If you can force the door shut, put a notice up overnight. This saves service charges as daytime callouts are cheaper. Do phone **020 8577 5172** and we'll try to schedule a first call the next day. We'll usually need a second call to be sure it is a block wide problem.

## Rough sleepers:

If you find someone sleeping in your hallway, **phone 999**.

Let us know the next day how you think they got in. We can:

- turn trades buttons off;
- change the locks;
- install extra door security such as 'Birmingham' or 'London' bars;
- review CCTV (if applicable)

## Parking Space Issues:

Whilst infuriating, this is **not an emergency**. It's a good idea to put a polite notice on the car as perhaps it's a genuine mistake. If it's a repeat offender then to help you we need the following details:

- The car make, colour and model
- The number plate
- If you think you know which property owner/resident, then the property number

If you know who it is, we'll write/email to the property owner and any sub-tenants. Otherwise, the DVLA aren't quick, a car trace takes about 3 weeks. Ultimately, if the cars dumped or untaxed, after a trace and written notification, cars can be removed and crushed.

## Gas Cylinders:

Be alert – Report anybody storing flammable items on site.

Gas cylinders must not be put in common parts, terraces or adjacent to lightning conductors because if there were a fire or any other incident nearby they can explode or release gas which fuels the fire.

## Vomit/Cleanliness:

Depending on where the mess is, we can arrange for an emergency early morning clean the following day. Call **020 8577 5172**.

## **Disturbance/Noisy Parties:**

If you are troubled by noisy neighbours, daytime or nighttimes, you should contact your Local Council Environmental Health Department. Noise disturbances need to be reported by the person hearing the noise (the witness) so this is something you need to do.

Numbers are available from **0800 118247** or other Directory Enquiries. You can find contact details for your nearest council via <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>.

## **Contractors Working At Weekends:**

In England and Wales contractors usually work from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 4pm on Saturdays. No working is not usually allowed on Sundays.

If you are troubled by noisy building works outside these hours, you should report the contractor and property owner to your Local Council Environmental Health Department.

Numbers are available from **0800 118247** or other Directory Enquiries.

## **Broken Glass:**

If a communal window or door is broken, we can arrange for an emergency call to board it up. Just give us a ring on **020 8577 5172**.

## Pigeons:

Love them or hate them, pigeons are a pest, **but not an emergency**. The first decision is to decide if they living in the building, or just sitting and creating mess.

If they are living in the building a specialist needs to be appointed to remove nests as well as seal up entry points. If they are perching prevention is the only real remedy, i.e., nets or pigeon spikes. It's not always easy to arrange prevention measures quickly as high level access is very expensive and often it is better to incorporate prevention measures in a cyclical decorations cycle. So, it's always a matter of degree. Lots of PR to stop people feeding them is the number one priority.

## Dead Birds:

Dead birds are a health & safety risk **but not an emergency**. To stop disease spreading and protect young children please put on gloves or suitably protect yourself, then pick up the animal and throw it in a hedge or bin to decompose.

## Crime in Progress:

If there is a crime in progress please call **999**.

If you want to report community policing matters please call **101**.

## Television Failure:

If your television has stopped working:

1. Check the plug and fuse.
2. Check the socket the TV aerial cable is plugged into, then:
3. Check if your neighbours have also lost TV reception.
4. If there has been a recent power failure it is probable that the TV booster kit needs re-starting, this kit is probably in a communal cupboard. (probably locked by an FB1 or FB2 key) that you can buy from any local hardware store.

If re-starting the booster kit does not work or you cant find it then we'll arrange a call out for you. If it turns out wires in a socket in your property are loose or your TV set is at fault we'll have to recharge the call-out to you.

## Mice:

Mice, unless a pet in a cage, are a pest, but **not an emergency**. You'll need to go buy a mouse trap or poison from a supermarket or hardware store.

If mice issues are reported to us, we may treat this as a service charge matter. If mice are widespread, then we'll need to arrange a specialist to evaluate points of entry in order to eradicate nests.

# Thinking about letting your property?

Although valuations and block management is our bread and butter, since Dunphys was established in 1908, we're always asked to manage specific commercial and residential lettings and have built an excellent Lettings Department with a wealth of experience to manage our client portfolios.

Which makes sense, because we know the ins-and outs of what makes your property work.

**Feel free to give our team a call if you'd like to discuss letting your property.**

**020 8577 5172**

# **Dunphys**

CHARTERED SURVEYORS est. 1908