



Wrap up warm – Winter is Here!

The winter wardrobe is back out for another year and that'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 time to ensure our pipes are well protected from the cold weather.

Des Nevin, Head of NI Water Customer Service Centre explains: “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 tablets and mobile phones or worse, 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 could put a massive strain on the distribution network. Insulating your pipework is an essential action to protect your water supply and that of your neighbours.”

[Check out the NI Water website for Further Information & Advice](#)



Top Tips to Winter-proof your home

- Wrap up pipes and water tanks with lagging – high street DIY stores have everything you need.
- 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 a plumber handy – type in your postcode at www.watersafe.org.uk to find your nearest accredited plumbing business.

Contents Winter 2018/19

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



Road Users urged to take extra care this Winter

The Department for Infrastructure's winter safety service is fully operational and ready to keep people moving on our roads.

From November until April 2019, around 300 staff and 130 gritters will be available to salt main roads to keep traffic moving safely and freely. Twelve specialist snow blowers are also available to be deployed if required.

Conor Loughrey, DfI's Director of Network Services, said: "At this time of year, the darker mornings and evenings and lower temperatures can make driving conditions more difficult and we advise all road users to take extra care.

"The Department's winter safety service is up and running and, whatever the weather, we will be working to keep our main roads open.

"Over 80,000 tonnes of salt is stockpiled and ready to be used when ice is forecast. Five thousand salt bins and 50,000 grit piles are also provided on a self-help basis on routes not included on the salting schedule."



DfI prepared for snow & ice

- 300 Staff on standby
- 80,000 tonnes of salt
- 131 gritters

Check www.trafficwatchni.com for updates

As part of the winter service, the Department salts the main through routes which carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day. In exceptional circumstances, roads with difficult topography carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles daily will also be salted. This means that 28% of the road network will be salted, directly benefiting around 80% of road users. As in previous years, arrangements are in place to enlist the help of contractors and local farmers to assist in efforts to clear blocked roads in the event of significant snow.

The Department is advising all drivers to exercise caution and drive with due care and attention in the more challenging conditions that winter can

bring. Road surface temperatures are usually a few degrees lower, so drivers should not rely on in-car temperature sensors as an indicator of possible frost or ice.

Mr Loughrey continued: "Even with the most careful and thorough planning, the use of special Met Office forecasts and the latest ice prediction technology, winter service is a battle against the elements and ice-free roads cannot be guaranteed. We all need to be mindful of the changing conditions and adjust the way we drive, ride or cycle to ensure it is appropriate for the conditions. The best advice is in the Highway Code - take extra care even if roads have been salted, be prepared for road conditions changing over

short distances and take care when overtaking gritters.

"Drivers should slow down; remain focused and alert; don't drink alcohol or take drugs and drive; and always wear a seatbelt. In particular, watch out for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders, as they will be much more difficult to see in the dark mornings and evenings. We all have a personal responsibility; to keep ourselves and other road users safe. Remember - Respect Everyone's Journey."

The Department's TrafficwatchNI and Road Safety teams will continue to offer advice and guidance via social media to all road users, to help the public prepare for winter driving conditions and plan their route.

For more information, download the Winter Service information leaflet:

[Keeping Traffic on the Move](#)

Further advice on driving in adverse weather conditions is available at:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/driving-adverse-weather



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



Coping with Flooding - Advice on Insurance

The weeks and months following a major weather incident can be stressful, not just physically and emotionally but also financially.

It can be difficult enough managing the immediate after effects of flooding without the added worry of how to replace any losses.

Information on nidirect is currently being updated to give advice on how to deal with these losses and with insurance to help relieve the financial burden.

[After a flood - making an insurance claim](#)

Recent home improvements, treasured photos or family mementos can all be washed away within a very short time: some people have likened it to a bereavement. Unfortunately not everything can be replaced, but insurance companies can offer some kind of financial compensation.

If you are a homeowner, your insurer should offer to provide or pay for the cost of suitable alternative accommodation, as well as the removal and storage of undamaged property. If you have buildings cover, your insurer will dry, clean, repair and restore your home.

If you rent your home, you'll need to contact the property owner as they are likely to be responsible for insuring only the building. However it is possible their insurance may also cover your temporary housing needs so ask your landlord about this too.

Everyone who has contents cover will be able to have their insurer dry, clean and restore their possessions or replace or pay for any possessions that cannot be cleaned up or repaired.

[Flood Re - Help with difficult or costly insurance cover](#)

For those households that have experienced flooding or have discovered that their home is situated within a recognised flood plain, getting affordable insurance can be difficult and costly.

The Government has been working with insurers on a scheme called 'Flood Re' that makes flood risk cover more widely available and affordable as part of your home insurance. This scheme is planned to run for a period of 25 years, at which point insurers should be offering policies based on actual risk to property.

[Flood Re website](#)

[Flood Re information leaflet](#)

[Association of British Insurers](#)

If you would like help in selecting insurance, making a claim or just getting good advice on how to be prepared, the Association of British Insurers is the voice of the UK's leading insurance and long-term savings industry. They provide peace of mind and advice while assuring best practise to households and businesses.

Follow these links for more information.

[Flooding](#)

[Storms](#)

[Choosing the right insurance](#)



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

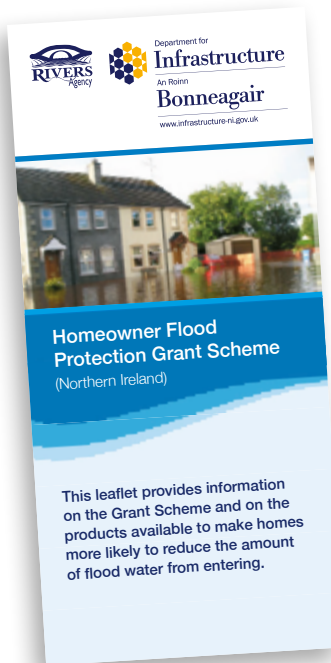
Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme

The Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme (Northern Ireland) is a government scheme to help homeowners make modifications to prevent flood water entering their homes.



It is aimed specifically at the owners of residential properties that have flooded internally in the past and continue to be exposed to flood risk.

Individual properties that meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme will be retrofitted with an appropriate range of measures, designed to make them more resistant to the entry of floodwater. Measures include flood doors, flood barriers, automatic airbrick covers, drainage non-return valves and waterproof wall treatments.

These measures can be effective, particularly for shallow depths of less than 600mm. Protecting an individual property from floods greater than 600mm is not recommended, as there is a risk of causing structural damage to the external walls due to excessive water pressure.

Eligibility for the Grant Scheme will be prioritised using either of the following criteria.

- Where the owner of a property can provide verifiable evidence of having internally flooded once or more in the past 25 years and which are also located within the estimated flood inundation areas illustrated on

the 1 in 25 year Fluvial Flood Hazard Maps.

- Properties for which the owner can provide verifiable evidence to substantiate internal flooding on two or more occasions in the past 25 years.

Full details of the scheme, including how to apply, can be found on the nidirect website.

[Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme](#)

[The Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme] is aimed specifically at the owners of residential properties that have flooded internally in the past and continue to be exposed to flood risk.



Flood gates can prevent or slow the ingress of flood water



Plastic covers can stop flood water entering through airbricks



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



NI Water clears Bag and Berg Blockages

Staff at NI Water have seen many bad blockages over the years, but nothing quite like what they witnessed recently in North Belfast.

Staff who attended to reports of out-of-sewer flooding in the area pulled out numerous black bags filled with rubbish that had been dumped down a manhole!

Stephanie McCullagh, Head of Wastewater at NI Water commented: “This act shows not only lack of respect for our network but also for the people living in the area. We would remind all our customers that opening a manhole and putting anything down it is forbidden. By doing this, you are obstructing a working sewer which is designed to take waste away from homes. Incidents like this cause out of sewer flooding and require valuable time and resources to resolve.

In another incident, on the Shankill Road in Belfast, staff found a ‘fatberg’ so thick it had risen to the top of the manhole cover. The build-

up was caused by people in local homes and businesses pouring fat, oil and grease into the sewers rather than disposing of it properly.

Stephanie McCullagh said: “We would appeal to all our customers, especially food outlets, to dispose of their fat, oil and grease appropriately. For householders, let it cool and then put it into the bin. Alternatively, pour it into a disposable container and take it to your local oil bank.

“We have all seen the disgusting effects of an overflowing manhole in the street and no one wants to see or smell it (not even us) but the

reality is, it happens regularly at a cost of millions to NI Water each year.”



L to R: removing rubbish from a domestic drain; Main sewer blocked with Fatberg; The process of clearing a Fatberg



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



Storm Naming

In September 2015, the Met Office and Met Éireann launched the 'Name Our Storms' campaign to name windstorms forecast to impact the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The public was asked to suggest names and, at the start of each season, a list of names to be used that year is published.

In line with international storm naming conventions the letters Q, U, X, Y and Z are not used.

The first storm to be named was Storm Abigail which moved across the UK in November 2015. In that first winter, eleven storms were named, with a further five named in 2016-17 and seven in 2017-18. In the 2017-18 season, we also had two storms that had already been named when they came to our shores. If another National Met



A Ali	H Hannah	O Oliver	V Violet
B Bronagh	I Idris	P Peggy	W Wyn
C Callum	J Jane	Q	X
D Deirdre	K Kevin	R Ross	Y
E Erik	L Lily	S Saoirse	Z
F Freya	M Max	T Tristan	
G Gareth	N Niamh	U	

Service has already named a storm, then we follow the well-established method of referring to it by that name.

In September 2018, a list of names for the 2018-19 season was released. By the end of September, we had already had two named systems cross Ireland and the UK. Storm Ali crossed Ireland and Scotland and was closely followed by Storm Bronagh, which brought strong winds and flooding to parts of England and Wales. In October, Storm Callum brought heavy rain and flooding to parts of Wales and strong winds to northern parts of the UK.

Why are storms named?

Storms are named in an effort to raise public awareness of when severe weather is expected in the UK and Ireland. This means that people can take action to prevent harm to themselves or their property.

When is a storm named?

In the Met Office, the criteria for naming storms is based on the National Severe Weather Warnings service. This is a combination of both the impact the weather may have and the likelihood of those impacts occurring. A storm will be named when it has the potential to cause medium or high impacts across the UK and could warrant an Amber or Red warning being issued.

Storm naming is just one example of how the Met Office and Met Éireann work closely together: they also collaborate on observation issues and aviation.

You can find out more about storm naming and weather forecasts for your area on the Met Office website www.metoffice.gov.uk. A mobile app is available for both iPhone and Android. For information on weather warnings for Northern Ireland, you can follow the Met Office twitter account [@metofficeNI](https://twitter.com/metofficeNI).



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



Managing the Lough Neagh Water Level

Lough Neagh is the largest fresh water lake in the British Isles. It has a surface area of 385km² and a catchment covering 43% of the surface area of Northern Ireland, as well as part of County Monaghan.

Six major rivers flow into the lough: the Moyola River, Ballinderry River, Blackwater, Upper Bann, Six Mile Water and the River Main. There are also many minor rivers and direct

drainage areas which also flow into the lough. The Lower Bann is the only outlet from Lough Neagh.

The Department for Infrastructure has the statutory obligation to regulate and control the water level within Lough Neagh within the range of 12.45–12.60m Ordnance Datum (OD) Belfast, in so far as climatic conditions allow. This preserves fisheries and natural beauty; facilitating recreation and tourism; and conserving fauna and flora.

It is not always possible to achieve the control range, as in excess of five times the flow can enter the lough than can be vented by the Lower Bann.

Each morning, readings are taken from four gauging stations, used to determine the water level around the lough. Weather forecasts and the previous three days' conditions are checked. Based on the time of the year and experience, a decision is then made on any required adjustments to the sluice gates at Toome.

The level and gate status is published each working day on the DfI website at:

[Lough Neagh levels](#) ↗

There are five 18.3m (60 foot) steel sluice gates at Toome which, when fully open, can raise 9ft above sill level, two fixed concrete side weirs

and a fish pass. The opening of the gates from all closed to all clear (gates out of the water) takes a minimum of three days. This is to try to simulate natural flood conditions. A similar regime exists for the closure of gates.



Below & Right: The Sluice Gates at Toome are used to control water levels within Lough Neagh



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



RCRG Messaging and GDPR

An important element of the work of the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) is to facilitate planning and preparation for communities to respond when severe weather is forecast.

Part of this involves informing communities directly with warnings of severe weather. At present the contact details held allow an email or text message to be issued to RCRG members. These details were collected during the initial formation of each individual community group.

On 25 May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a new EU Regulation, came into effect. The new regulations apply to all organisations and companies which process or hold information relating to an individual that can

be used to directly or indirectly identify the person. It puts greater accountability on the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to keep your data secure, gives you more consent over what we hold your data for, as well as who or if we can share your data with another party.

DfI currently holds contact information to communicate with members within each RCRG area. This is usually during periods when there are warnings of severe weather conditions or when issuing the RCRG Newsletter. DfI may share contact information and details with local district councils for the purposes of community preparedness and keeping in contact prior to and during an emergency. Appropriate third party information may also be circulated from time to time.

The Department recognises that the processing of this information comes with significant responsibilities and would reassure all RCRG members that these responsibilities are taken seriously. However it is hoped that members will stay subscribed to continue receiving weather warning updates and associated publications.

The Department recognises that the processing of this information comes with significant responsibilities and would reassure all RCRG members that these responsibilities are taken seriously.

If you feel that you no longer want to receive this information you should contact rcrg@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk indicating 'STOP' and your details will be removed.



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

CLICK TO READ...



BeReadyNI

A social media awareness campaign called 'BeReadyNI' was piloted in Northern Ireland during National Preparedness Month in September 2018.

A wide range of organisations that are involved in raising awareness on public safety issues participated in the campaign. These included the emergency services, Public Health Agency, NI Electric Networks, Met Office, Red Cross, Education Authority, Consumer Council, Translink and the Department for Infrastructure. The primary aim of the campaign was to inform the public about where to find relevant information about the different types of emergency situations that they may encounter.

During the month, messages on gas safety, flooding, emergency contact numbers, stress, power outages, first aid, fire safety and weather warning advice were widely posted and shared.

It is anticipated that the tag #BeReadyNI will be used in future by all organisations involved in public safety and can help ensure the public are aware of where they can access relevant, accurate information to help them prepare for any emergency situation.



High-tech Approach to Winter Service

The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the winter maintenance of more than 7,200km of roads across an area of over 13,700km².

This covers a wide variety of terrains and climates: from the long coastline to the high roads crossing the Glenshane Pass and the Antrim Mountains.

To assist duty engineers in deciding whether or not to salt the treated network, the Department maintains a network of 21 weather stations at sites across Northern Ireland, including Enniskillen, Downpatrick, Carryduff, Coleraine Mountain, Glenshane Pass and Foyle Bridge.

Each station provides real time weather information using the following sensors:

1. Wind sensor - provides wind speed (a) and wind direction (b).
2. Camera - live updates giving visual inspection of road carriageway and traffic.

3. Present weather detector - current weather state (dry, raining, snow etc.) and visibility.
4. Air temperature sensor - gives current air temperature, dew point and relative humidity.
5. Road surface sensor - provides current road temperature, road state (dry, icy, wet etc.) and presence of de-icing salt.

Even with the most thorough planning, the use of special Met Office forecasts and the latest ice prediction technology, winter service is a battle against the elements and ice-free roads cannot be guaranteed.

DFI has developed an online Salted Network Map showing roads that may be salted when ice is forecast, to help the public to plan their route during the winter.

Road users should not assume that because a road is shown as being part of the salted network that it has been treated and that it is ice free.



GETTING WEATHER READY

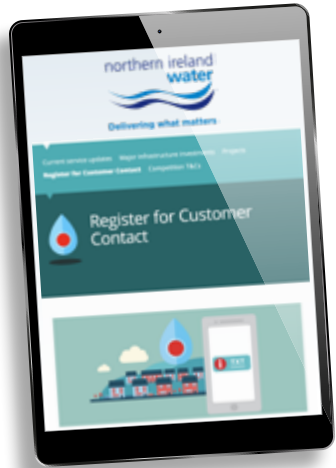


The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)





NI Water Customer Contacts Project - Win an iPad


NI Water has launched a new customer contact web form which will allow customers to register their details to help them keep their records up-to-date.

If something happens which affects your property, you need to know about it as soon as possible. Registering your details will allow NI Water to send you text alerts and give you peace of mind that you are being kept informed.

NI Water is committed to improving the service they provide to customers and to offer an increasingly user-friendly, proactive approach to keeping customers informed.

They currently only have 47% coverage of contact telephone numbers on their accounts, and less than half of these are mobile numbers. In addition, NI Water number coverage for domestic customers, which make up the vast

majority of approximately 900,000 accounts, is generally out of date.

To encourage customers to register, NI Water are giving away two iPads every month from October 2018 to February 2019. Registering is totally free and you'll only get texts about NI Water services. **Register for Customer Contact** 



GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



Emergency Numbers

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)**

GETTING WEATHER READY

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



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!**

Partner Organisations:



GETTING WEATHER READY



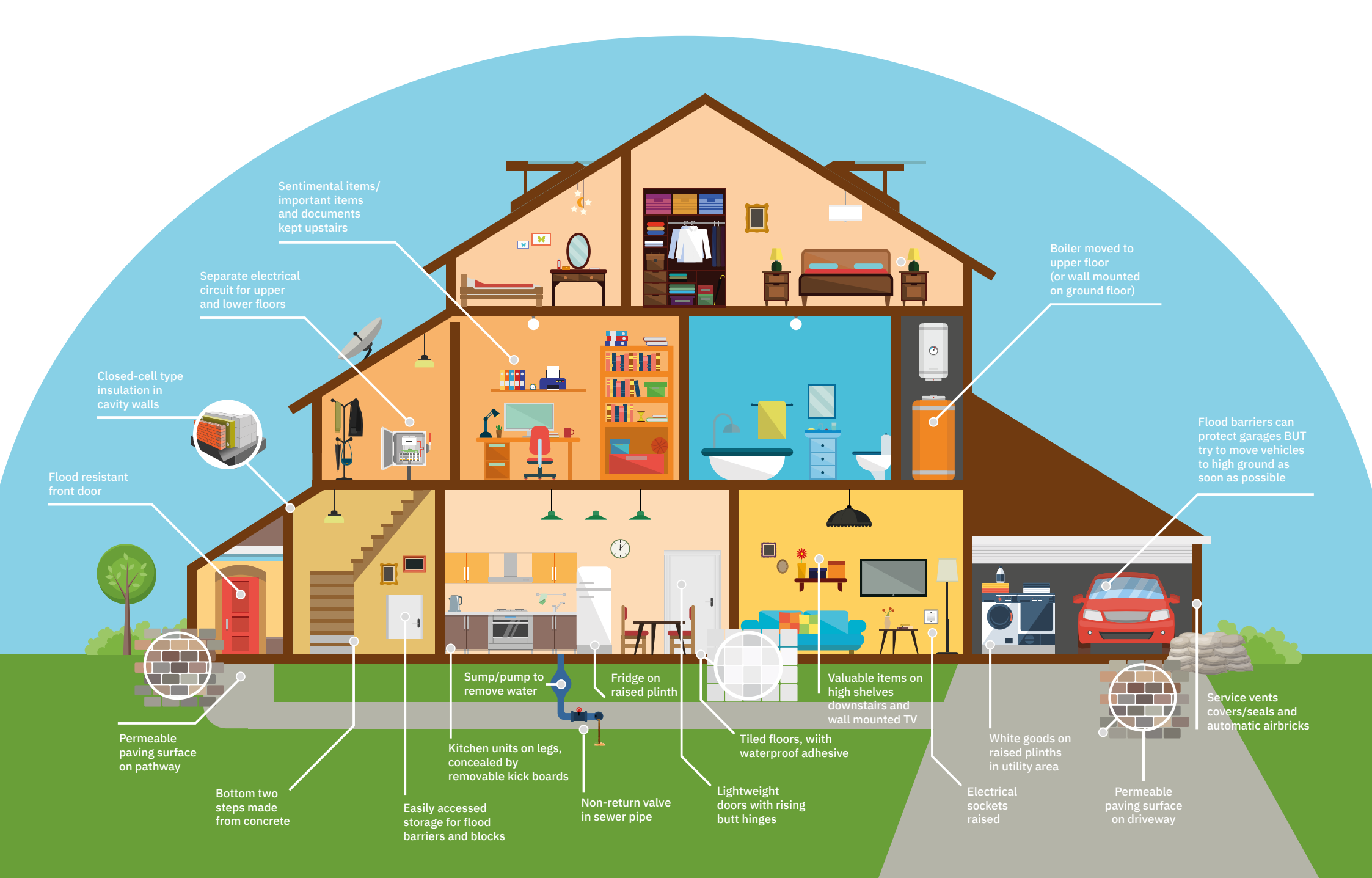
The RCRG Newsletter

Contents

CLICK TO READ...



Gritting team on standby in case of ice and snow



Sentimental items/
important items
and documents
kept upstairs

Separate electrical
circuit for upper
and lower floors

Boiler moved to
upper floor
(or wall mounted
on ground floor)

Closed-cell type
insulation in
cavity walls

Flood barriers can
protect garages BUT
try to move vehicles
to high ground as
soon as possible

Flood resistant
front door

Sump/pump to
remove water

Fridge on
raised plinth

Valuable items on
high shelves
downstairs and
wall mounted TV

Service vents
covers/seals and
automatic airbricks

Permeable
paving surface
on pathway

Kitchen units on legs,
concealed by
removable kick boards

Tiled floors, with
waterproof adhesive

White goods on
raised plinths
in utility area

Bottom two
steps made
from concrete

Easily accessed
storage for flood
barriers and blocks

Non-return valve
in sewer pipe

Lightweight
doors with rising
butt hinges

Electrical
sockets raised

Permeable
paving surface
on driveway