

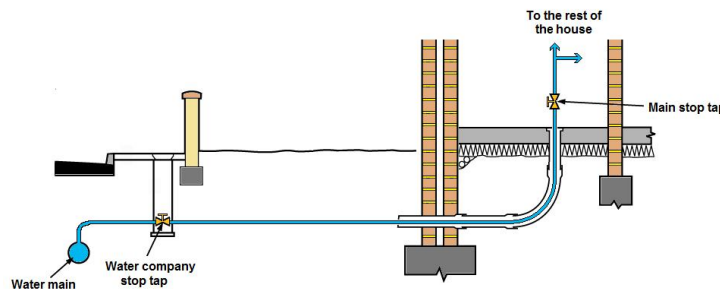
DEALING WITH PLUMBING AND HEATING EMERGENCIES

This advice guide is part of a series of free guides produced by the Association of Plumbing & Heating Contractors Ltd. which provide consumers with essential basic information on a range of plumbing and heating matters including installations, repairs and maintenance.

On the rare occasion a plumbing and heating system develops a leak, knowing what to do and acting quickly can prevent or reduce serious damage to property or in some cases even save a life. This guide will help you plan for such emergencies.

Major water leaks and floods

If you should experience a major water leak or flood you need to turn off the water supply to your property using the stop tap. Every property has two such taps, the first is the main tap usually located within a property and the second is the water company boundary stop tap.



Main stop tap

Usually located in the kitchen although it can be located anywhere on the ground floor, or entry floor to a flat or maisonette. This tap controls the supply of water to the whole home and when turned off will stop all water. This tap can be boxed in or hidden behind cupboards sometimes making them hard to find.



Boundary stop tap

Usually located at the boundary of a property by the water company, this tap cuts off the entire supply to the property including outside pipes. Some older taps can turn the water off in up to four properties at once, so inform neighbours before turning this tap off.

Isolation Valves



If you experience a smaller leak within your property (e.g. in your sanitary ware or kitchen appliances) these can be controlled using isolation valves. These are small in-line valves installed next to the appliance or ware, and can quickly stop a problem without stopping the entire water supply. To operate you can either turn the lever or use a screwdriver to turn the valve to stop the water supply.

Hot water systems

If you experience a leak in your hot water system you need to stop water entering your system. If you have a hot water cylinder you must find the gate valve (usually in your airing cupboard), turn this off and turn on any hot taps to empty the cylinder of all water. If you have a combi boiler the valve will be located under the boiler and will be a lever operated isolation valve.



How do I prepare for a water emergency?

Look for the valves and taps and see which ones turn off which appliance. Knowing the ways to turn off the supply to appliances in your home can be vital. It is important that you know the location and way to stop water to the following:

- The whole house (main stop tap)
- Toilet(s)
- Basin(s)
- Washing machine
- Dishwasher
- Cold water storage tank or tanks in the loft (if fitted)
- Hot water system
- The whole property (boundary stop tap)

If you cannot find the main stop tap or the boundary stop tap you should investigate and find out where they are as they are important in an emergency.

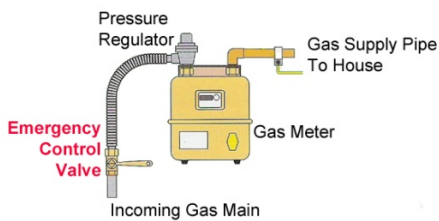
What to do if you think there is a water leak

If you think there is a water leak you need to:

- Turn off the water to the whole house at the mains stop tap.
- Open the cold taps to drain the water from the pipes to stop the water leaking further.
- If the leak is from an appliance find the isolation valve and turn it off (which might allow you to turn the rest of the water to house back on again).
- If water is collecting in a ceiling, and dripping through, puncture the ceiling with a small screwdriver or hand drill (DO NOT USE A POWER DRILL) and catch the water in a bucket. This will stop the spread of water and reduce the risk of a ceiling collapsing, creating more damage to the property.
- Call an APHC registered plumber.

How to deal with gas leaks

Of everything piped into your home, none is more dangerous than natural gas. It is explosive and highly flammable. Gas is piped from mains in the street to your home on a similar way to mains water, the only difference is that natural gas uses different pipe materials to get to your home. This pipe can be made from mild steel, low carbon steel or newer yellow polyethylene plastic. A natural gas meter is often set up as detailed overleaf.

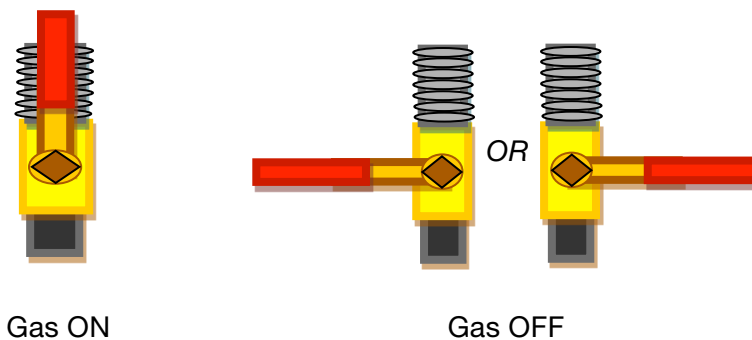


The most important part of the gas meter installation is the emergency control valve, as this valve is fitted to allow you to turn off the gas to your house in an emergency if there was a gas leak.

How do I prepare for a gas emergency?

Look for the gas meter and emergency control valve. Make sure you know the ways to turn off the gas supply. If you cannot find the emergency control valve you should investigate and find out where it is as it will be vital to use it in an emergency.

The correct method of operation is shown below:



What to do if you think there is a gas leak

If you think there is a gas leak you should:

- Turn the gas off at the meter using the emergency control valve unless the meter is located in the cellar/basement.
- Open doors and windows and ventilate the area as much as possible.
- Do not smoke or use any naked flames.
- Do not operate any electrical switches or appliances (turning them on or off can cause a spark).
- For properties with natural gas, call emergency services, and report the leak on:

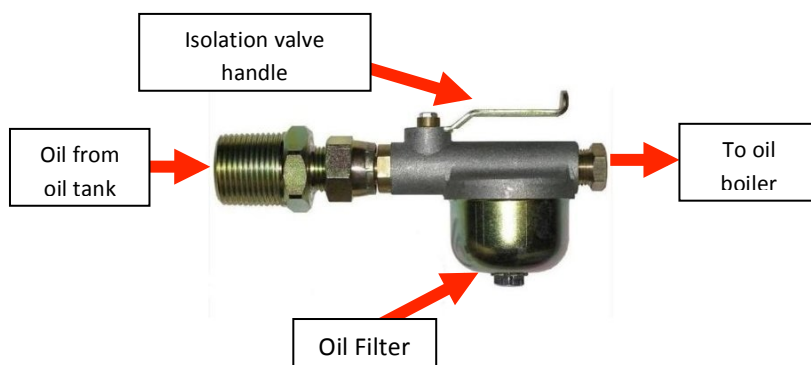
0800 111 999 (24hrs a day)

For properties with LPG, call the supplier emergency number, provided by the supplier. Write the number in the box below for quick and easy reference.

Remember it is better to be safe than sorry, so if you are unsure treat it as a gas leak.

How to deal with fuel oil leaks

Fuel oil can be as dangerous as natural gas. It is not as explosive but is highly flammable.



Oil is piped into your home from an oil storage tank. The oil supply pipe is constructed from low carbon steel or polyethylene plastic pipe.

There are two main ways to stop an oil leak in your property, both involve the use of an isolation valve.

Tank isolation valve

This valve will stop all oil from the tank to your house and to all underground pipes buried on your property and is located on the outlet from your oil storage tank and normally has a filter built into it.

The appliance isolation valve

The other type of isolation valve for an oil boiler or range is the appliance isolation valve, this is located either as the buried oil pipeline enters the property (as soon as it emerges from the floor) or just before the fire valve as the oil pipeline enters the property.



How do I prepare for an oil emergency?

Look for the oil tank and appliance isolation valves. Make sure you know the ways to turn off the oil supply. If you cannot find the isolation valve you should investigate and find out where it is as it will be vital to use it in an emergency.

What to do if you think there is an oil leak

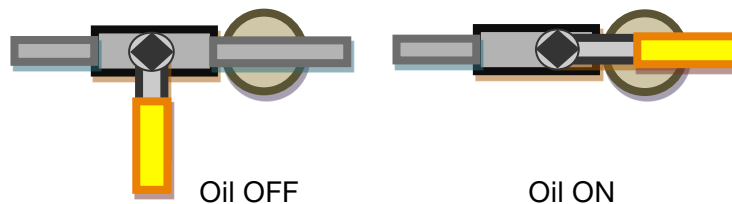
If you think there is an oil leak you should:

- Turn the oil off at the storage tank using the isolation valve unless the leak is located inside the property, in which case the appliance control valve will stop the leak.

- Do not smoke or use any naked flames (so you don't accidentally set fire to the oil),
- When cleaning up spilled oil remember it cannot just be thrown away in the normal refuse and must be disposed of separately.
- Call an oil qualified engineer to repair the leak.

How to isolate the oil supply?

Turn the isolation valve so the handle is in the position below



Hopefully this guide will help prepare you for any leaks of plumbing services in your home and give you an insight into what to do if there is an emergency.

In summary

It is important that you and other people living in the property are prepared for a leak from the plumbing or heating system. It is worth taking the time to find all the appliance servicing valves and fuel supply isolation valves.

About APHC

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