

IMPORTANT BRIEFING NOTE

PREVENTING ESCAPES OF WATER FROM APARTMENTS

Dear Leaseholders and Residents,

We are writing to remind all leaseholders and residents of the importance of properly maintaining the water and plumbing installations within their apartments.

We previously issued guidance regarding the prevention of escapes of water, including advice in relation to ageing boilers, washing machines and dishwashers. In light of further incidents experienced at Wapping Quays, we are issuing this further briefing to reinforce and expand upon that advice.

Why this is important

An escape of water from one apartment can have a significant impact on other people's homes.

Water can travel very quickly through a building and into neighbouring apartments, particularly those below. Even what may initially appear to be a relatively minor leak can cause extensive damage to ceilings, walls, floors, kitchens, electrical systems, furniture and personal belongings.

The disruption and distress caused to those affected can be considerable, in addition to the cost of repairs and the potential implications for the building's insurance.

A recent incident has also demonstrated how much damage can result from the failure of something as relatively small as a flexible connector hose to a toilet. Plumbing components and connections can deteriorate over time, and we would encourage leaseholders not to wait for a failure to occur before considering inspection or replacement.

Stop Taps

Leaseholders are responsible for ensuring that the stop tap serving their apartment is:

- Accessible and not obstructed.
- Known to the leaseholder and occupants of the apartment.
- Capable of being reached quickly in an emergency.
- In full working order and able to completely shut off the water supply when required.

Stop taps should be checked regularly to ensure they continue to operate correctly.

Where an apartment is going to be left unoccupied for more than **48 hours**, we strongly recommend that the water supply is turned off at the stop tap before leaving the property.

This simple precaution may help prevent a significant escape of water from occurring while the apartment is unattended.

Ageing Boilers

We would also like to reiterate our previous advice regarding ageing boilers.

Older boilers and associated pipework should be appropriately serviced and inspected by a competent contractor. Leaseholders should not assume that a boiler or associated installation remains safe and reliable simply because it is still operating.

Where a boiler, pipework or associated components are showing signs of age, deterioration or repeated faults, professional advice should be obtained regarding repair or replacement.

Flexible Hoses and Plumbing Connections

Flexible connector hoses are commonly used to connect toilets, taps and appliances to the water supply.

These components can deteriorate, perish or fail with age and, if they fail, can result in a significant escape of water in a very short period of time.

We strongly encourage leaseholders to:

- Check flexible hoses and plumbing connections regularly.
- Look for signs of deterioration, corrosion, damage or leakage.
- Arrange for hoses and connections to be inspected by a competent plumber.
- Replace components where appropriate rather than waiting for them to fail.

The cost of replacing an ageing plumbing component can be relatively small compared with the potential cost and disruption caused by an escape of water.

Washing Machines and Dishwashers

Connections to washing machines and dishwashers should be checked regularly for signs of leakage or deterioration.

Particular care should be taken whenever an appliance is:

- Installed.
- Replaced.
- Connected.
- Disconnected.
- Moved or repositioned.

Water supply and waste connections must be properly secured, and all connections should be checked afterwards to ensure there are no leaks.

Please do not assume that a newly installed or recently moved appliance is free from leaks without checking the connections.

Toilets and Drains

Toilets and drains must only be used for their intended purpose.

The following items must **not** be disposed of down toilets or drains:

- Wet wipes.
- So-called "flushable" wipes.
- Sanitary products.

- Nappies.
- Kitchen roll.
- Paper towels.
- Other unsuitable materials.

Even products marketed as "**flushable wipes**" can contribute to blockages within the drainage system and should be disposed of in a bin.

Blockages can result in water and waste backing up into apartments and communal areas, potentially causing significant damage and disruption.

Early Signs of a Problem

Please do not ignore early signs of a potential leak or plumbing issue.

Examples may include:

- Dripping pipes or connections.
- Corrosion or deterioration.
- Damp patches or staining.
- Unexplained water.
- Changes in water pressure.
- Persistent moisture around appliances, toilets or pipework.
- Unusual smells or signs of drainage problems.

Issues should be investigated promptly before they develop into a more significant problem.

Professional Maintenance

Where there is any doubt regarding the condition of a boiler, pipe, valve, flexible hose or appliance connection, leaseholders should arrange for an appropriately competent contractor to inspect the issue.

We strongly recommend against attempting repairs without the appropriate knowledge or experience, particularly where water, plumbing or heating systems are involved.

Prompt professional maintenance can often identify and resolve a problem before it results in an escape of water.

Contents Insurance

Leaseholders and residents should also ensure that they have appropriate contents insurance in place for their personal belongings.

The building's insurance should not be regarded as a substitute for individual contents insurance.

Contents insurance may help protect personal possessions, furniture and other belongings in the event of damage.

Where an apartment is let, tenants should also be encouraged to arrange appropriate insurance for their own personal possessions.

Impact on Building Insurance

Escapes of water can result in substantial insurance claims and repair costs.

An increasing number of escapes of water claims may also affect the building's insurance history and could contribute to increased insurance premiums and excesses in the future. This can ultimately have an impact on the costs payable by leaseholders through the service charge.

Preventative maintenance and early intervention can therefore help protect not only individual apartments but the wider building and all leaseholders.

If a resident is aware of a fault in or related to their property, such as their stop tap not working as it should, and in the event of damage being caused following an escape of water the insurers may reject a claim deeming the leak to have been preventable and the liability would then fall to the Leaseholder of the property where the escape has originated from. The lease stipulates that Leaseholders are responsible for keeping their Demised Premises and all Service Installations exclusively serving their apartment in good and substantial repair, order and condition, including the renewal and replacement of worn or damaged parts. The lease also requires a leaseholder to make good damage to the Development caused by an act, omission or negligence of an occupant or person using their apartment.

A Shared Responsibility

Maintaining the water and plumbing installations within an apartment is **not simply about protecting that particular apartment**.

At Wapping Quays, an escape of water can quickly affect neighbouring homes, particularly apartments located below. A relatively small failure within one apartment can result in serious damage, significant disruption and distress for other residents.

Relatively straightforward preventative maintenance can help protect your own property and your neighbours' homes, while reducing the risk of costly repairs and insurance claims.

We therefore ask all leaseholders to take the time to check the condition of the water and plumbing installations within their apartments and to arrange appropriate maintenance where necessary.

Everyone has a part to play in helping to reduce the risk of escapes of water and protecting the homes and property of others within the development.

Thank you for your cooperation and for taking these important preventative measures seriously.

Kind regards,

Berkeley Shaw Real Estate