

# Winter-proof your workplace: How businesses can prepare for the colder months

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With the weather starting to turn and the colder months on the horizon, how can businesses prepare their buildings for the challenges of winter?

Fabien Caqueret, Managing Director at property maintenance and facilities management company [MSL](#), shares how organisations, both big and small, can prepare their facilities ready for the autumn and winter seasons – and why it's essential to do so.

## Insulating pipes

"When temperatures drop to freezing or below, it can wreak havoc on water systems, including pipes. A single burst pipe can cause flooding, electrical damage, and business interruption that far outweighs the cost of prevention," says Fabien.

He advises, "Check all pipes within your premises, both internal and external, for any cracks or damage, and ensure they are properly insulated before the first frost hits to prevent them from freezing and subsequently bursting. It's also worth reviewing existing insulation, as older or water-damaged material may no longer provide effective protection. This work is best carried out in the autumn months to avoid costly issues when winter arrives."

## Clear guttering

"Making sure that gutters and drains are clear is integral to ensuring a smooth sailing winter. As they are

often out of sight, they are one maintenance task that can be missed but neglecting them can be detrimental to your premises," explains Fabien.

"Remove any debris, such as leaves and twigs, that has built up in the gutters, as this can freeze over in the winter months, causing drain blockages, leaks and potential flooding to your facilities," he adds. "If not maintained and cared for, guttering will need to be replaced, which can be very costly and lead to increased downtime for your business."

#### Checking the roof

"Whilst checking your roof is especially important during the winter months, it is essential maintenance that needs to be carried out throughout the year," shares Fabien. "Look out for any slipped roof tiles, cracks or rips in the roofing material that need to be fixed."

"Any roof maintenance work should be carried out during periods of good weather, as conducting the work in cold and icy conditions is extremely dangerous. Not regularly maintaining your roof can lead to costly repairs and even force you to close your business for an extended period, both of which are unwelcome news for any business owner."

#### Check energy efficiency

"During the winter, it's likely that you'll be using more energy through increased heating and lighting as the days get colder and darker," Fabien says. "But if your building isn't efficient, you will be facing larger bills, which can place unnecessary strain on budgets during the colder months."

"That's why it's important to check that the building is insulated and that the boiler is in good working order. You may want to have an ESOS assessment, as this will identify areas of the business where energy use can be improved and costs minimised. Simple steps such as sealing gaps around doors and windows, regularly servicing HVAC systems, and checking thermostats and controls can all help reduce energy loss and keep staff comfortable during the winter months."

#### Prepare for snowfall

"Whilst we don't always get a blizzard of snow in the UK, being prepared just in case is always beneficial, as heavy snow can cause major issues, from business closures to accidents or falls involving staff, which can cause serious disruption and unexpected costs if the right precautions aren't in place," shares Fabien.

"Having a stockpile of items such as grit salt, de-icers and snow shovels will help you keep your business open and operations running smoothly in the event of heavy snowfall."

#### Get maintenance services in place

"If you are a new business owner, or you're between maintenance companies, the autumn months are a great time to get a [facilities management](#) company on board to handle any cold weather issues that will inevitably occur in the winter," says Fabien.

"Having a maintenance company in place can also support you throughout the year, ensuring regular upkeep is undertaken and preventing bigger issues from happening once the bad weather set in."