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Escape of Water in Residential Properties

INTRODUCTION

Escape of water in residential properties and blocks of apartments is a continual problem, that can be exacerbated if there is no means of isolating the water flow in a property, when the occupier is out or away, and a leak occurs during that period.

The causes of such problems are numerous from frozen pipes, failure of appliance fittings, failure of plumbing joints, problems with seals around baths, basins and toilets, blocked overflow pipes or poorly fixed seals or damaged tile sealant that allows water to gradually penetrate behind the tiles.

Such failures can cause a rapid deluge of water with consequent immediate impact and damage within the property of origin and potentially those beneath or even to the sides. However often a small connection failure can go unnoticed and gradually seep behind partitioning and walls or through floors causing a problem in a neighbour's property that is hard to trace and can require significant expense to eliminate.

Property insurers are now adopting a tougher stance on properties where there is a history of escape of water losses by increasing premiums, imposing punitive terms or requiring the installation of leak detection systems.



PRECAUTIONS

There are a number of things that can be done to help reduce a potential loss and procedures and controls that can be adopted to help mitigate or reduce the extent of the damage:



- Regularly inspect seals around sanitaryware and inspect joints of any accessible or visible pipes, joints and fittings.
- Make sure all exposed pipes and tanks are lagged with at least 32mm of lagging material.
- Ensure areas that are vulnerable to frost are heated to at least 5oc.
- Make sure the location of any water stopcocks and other isolation points are known to the apartment owner or occupier and that any isolation points outside the apartment are known to the caretaker or concierge and one or more responsible occupiers of the apartments within the block or each floor level within the block.
- Regularly check that stopcocks operate freely.
- Keep full contact records for all owners and tenants.
- Encourage all owners and occupiers to advise the caretaker or concierge when they are away from their property for more than two or three days and encourage them to leave keys and permit access in the event of an emergency.
- If possible, ensure the property management can access any of the properties when an incident has been identified and deal with it.
- Consider fitting a leak detection system within the property. These systems are designed to identify a potential leak, either as a result of an irregular change in flowrates of the supply or from a sustained flow of water for a longer than a specified period. Depending on the system installed, once a leak is detected the system will either automatically isolate the supply by activating a shut-off valve, or notify the owner, occupier or concierge/caretaker of a leak, either at the property or apartment block itself using a control panel and audible alert, or remotely via an app or text to a smart phone. A company specialising in leak detection equipment should be engaged to ensure that the most appropriate solution for the property is specified prior to any installation work being carried out.

COMPANIES SUPPLYING SUCH SPECIALIST SERVICES AND SYSTEMS INCLUDE:

LeakSAFE Solutions Limited www.leakSAFE.com

AquaLeak Detection Limited www.aqualeak.com

WaterGuard Services Limited www.waterguard.co.uk

Polygon Group www.polyongroup.com