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COLD WEATHER ADVICE FROM THAMES WATER

Protect your water pipes from frost and don't forget hungry birds

As arctic temperatures blast Britain, Thames Water has issued a double dose of wintry advice for customers:

- Check your household water pipes are properly lagged to stop them bursting when the thaw arrives.
- Help garden birds survive the freeze by feeding them solidified cooking fat, which risks pollution when disposed of down the drain.

Ed Mitchell, Head of Environment at Thames Water, said: "Winter is finally making its presence felt, but our advice can make a big difference in minimising its impact.

"Not only will ensuring your pipes are properly insulated help guard against the huge inconvenience of a burst flooding your property, but it will also help save water.

"It's a surprise to many people, but our region is very dry ? per head of population London receives less rainfall than Madrid and Istanbul.

"To date this winter has been particularly dry - November to January was the fourth driest on record - so every little bit of water saved now will help ensure there's enough to keep everybody supplied in the summer.

"We're also encouraging customers to mix cooking fat with seeds and food scraps to provide vital extra nourishment for garden birds during the big freeze.

"It really can help them survive the cold spell, and it's a also a much more environmentally friendly way of disposing of the fat than pouring it down the drain,

"Once in the sewer network hot fat quickly solidifies, increasing the risk of sewage backing up into customers' own properties, or polluting rivers and streams.

Thames Water estimates that over 1000 tonnes of cooking fat is swilled down its 40,000-mile sewer network each year. Annually the company spends approximately £7 million clearing around 100,000 blockages from public sewers, around half of which are caused by fat.

The only fats to avoid giving to the birds are lighter polyunsaturated fats like vegetable oil.

Thames Water's alternative advice to customers is to carefully pour the liquid cooking fat into an old tin or other sturdy container. When it has fully cooled and solidified, the fat should be wrapped in newspaper, then put in the bin.

Further information on winter water efficiency and what not to put down the drain is available from Thames Water's Customer Centre (tel: 0845 9200

800).

For further information please contact: Nick Tennant: 07747 643 642 or Thames Water Press Office 0118 373 8921.

Water saving tip - turn off the tap when brushing your teeth