

# GETTING WEATHER READY



## Introducing the Regional Community Resilience Group Newsletter



The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) was formed in 2013 to help local communities prepare for and respond to weather related emergencies.

The group brings together Multi-Agency Partner Organisations from government, utilities and the voluntary sector to work for and with Communities at Risk of Severe Weather.

The RCRG aims to provide a forum to facilitate co-ordination, communication, partnership working and capacity building on community resilience issues. The group is currently working with around 26 communities across Northern Ireland to Inform and Resource them and improve preparedness and community resilience measures.

Unfortunately severe weather events will continue to occur but through good communication, accessible reliable information and established practical measures communities can and have applied self-help measures to reduce impacts and protect property.

This newsletter will be used to highlight important developments to enhance community resilience, provide an opportunity for communities to share experiences to the benefit of others and highlight key responder contacts to help readers to **Get Weather Ready!**

### Partner Organisations:



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# Winter bites

The Department for Infrastructure's winter safety service is fully operational and ready to keep people moving on our roads.

From November 2017 until April 2018 around 300 staff and 130 gritters will be available to salt main roads to keep traffic moving safely and freely. Twelve specialist snow blowers are also available to be deployed if required.

John Irvine, Head of Network Services, Department for Infrastructure, said: "At this time of year the darker mornings and evenings and lower temperatures can make driving conditions more difficult and we advise all road users to take extra care.

"The Department's winter safety service is up and running and, whatever the weather, we will be working to keep our main roads open.

"Over 90,000 tonnes of salt is stockpiled and ready to be used when ice is forecast. Salt bins



and grit piles are also provided on a self-help basis on routes not included on the salting schedule."

As part of the winter service, the Department salts the main through routes which carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day. In exceptional circumstances, roads with difficult topography carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles daily will also be salted. This means that 28% of the road network will be salted, directly benefiting around 80% of road users. As in previous years, arrangements are in place to enlist the help of contractors and local farmers to assist in efforts to clear blocked roads in the event of significant snow.

The Department is advising motorists to exercise caution and drive with due care and attention in the more challenging conditions that winter can bring.

John Irvine continued: "Even with the most careful and thorough planning, the use of special Met Office forecasts and the latest ice prediction technology, winter service is a battle against the elements and ice-free roads cannot be guaranteed. We all need to be mindful of the changing conditions and adjust the way we drive, ride or cycle to ensure it is appropriate for the conditions. The best advice is in the Highway Code, take extra care even if roads have been salted, be prepared for road conditions

changing over short distances and take care when overtaking gritters.

"Drivers should slow down, never ever drink or take drugs and drive and always wear a seatbelt. In particular, watch out for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders, as they will be much more difficult to see in the dark mornings and evenings."

"We all have a personal responsibility; to ourselves and to other road users. Remember – Respect Everyone's Journey"

[For more information download the Winter Service information leaflet 'Keeping Traffic on the Move During Winter'](#)

[For advice on driving in bad weather, download 'Driving in adverse weather conditions'](#)



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# NI Water launches its Winter Campaign

## Frozen Pipes can Flood Homes this Winter, so wrap up warm!

This was the message at the launch of NI Water's winter campaign, which also introduced NI Water's new 'water drop' character, Flo.

Flo was created to raise awareness of how we need the water to 'flo' through our pipes this winter, rather than freeze, burst and cause flooding.

Sara Venning, NI Water's Chief Executive, said: "NI Water is delighted to once again launch our winter campaign in partnership with a whole range of organisations, including the Consumer Council, Utility Regulator, Ulster Farmers' Union and Retail NI – and introduce Flo of course! The combined resources of all of these partners, and many others, enables us to spread our message to all sections of the community.

"Everyone has a role to play in preparing for freezing temperatures and ensuring that the water continues to 'flo' freely through our pipes all winter long! Over the coming months, Flo will be giving advice on the steps everyone needs



to take to protect their property and possessions from the damage a burst pipe can create.

"The devastation caused by burst pipes should not be underestimated. Not only can the water cause structural damage to a property, but the lasting damage in a home can be to personal items, including photographs and electrical equipment such as tablets, iPads and laptops, that may not be replaceable.

"On a wider scale, if you imagine the impact of thousands of litres of water pouring out of burst water pipes; any water distribution network would struggle to maintain continuity of supply in those circumstances. Insulating your pipework is an essential action to protect your water supply and that of your neighbours.

The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr Nuala McAllister, said: "The key message

to remember is that frozen pipes can flood homes and cause havoc, often taking months to repair. The Council would encourage home and business owners to ensure that their property is appropriately protected against the threat of burst water pipes. Simple steps taken by property owners now could save considerable stress and expense later in the event of burst pipes."

There are lots of simple things that homes and businesses can do to prepare for a cold winter, and there's no time like the present to get started:

- Wrap up pipes and water tanks with lagging – high street DIY stores have everything you need.

- Fix dripping taps – even a small trickle can result in a frozen pipe.
- Find your property's stop tap and make sure you can turn it off – most are under the kitchen sink.
- Leave the heating on low if you go away for a winter break.
- Check your central heating boiler has been serviced – it should be serviced annually.
- Keep the name of a plumber handy – type in your postcode at [www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk) to find your nearest accredited plumbing business.

[Click here to watch the new NI Water Video featuring Flo and for Further Information & Advice.](#)



All Flo at Belfast City Hall as NI Water launches its' winter awareness campaign! Pictured at the launch is; Glyn Roberts, Retail NI; John Mills, Utility Regulator; Sara Venning, NI Water CEO; the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr Nuala McAllister; Sinead Dynan, Consumer Council; and Barclay Bell, Ulster Farmers' Union.



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# Plan Ahead for Severe Weather

We have all seen images in the news recently of the devastating effects of hurricanes in the Caribbean; and flooding in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

In this country, we are fortunate that our weather events are much less severe. However, our lives can still, at times, be disrupted by the effects of storms or flooding.

To help you prepare for these situations, the Regional Community Resilience Group

has produced a Household Severe Weather Plan. This booklet will:

- help make you better prepared for severe weather;
- help everyone to understand the roles of householders, the community and emergency responders;

- leave you better informed of the dangers that severe weather poses to you and your community; and
- help you, your family and your community to manage and recover from severe weather in your area.

**[Download a copy of the Household Severe Weather Plan by clicking here.](#)**

**[Click here for more information about dealing with severe weather](#)**

## Met Office Weather App



Now we are in the coldest part of the year, many of us will be keeping a closer eye on the weather forecasts. Fortunately this is now much easier if you download the Met Office Weather App.

The Met Office has responsibility for issuing weather warnings under the National Severe Weather Warning Service. It works closely with partner agencies in Northern Ireland to assess risk and warn of potential weather impacts.

Make sure you're up-to-date at all times by downloading the App or follow the Met Office on twitter @MetOfficeNI or @Metoffice.

Weather warnings can also be accessed at the **[Met Office website](#)**

## Emergency Numbers

No matter how prepared we are for winter and cold, inclement weather, there's always the chance of an emergency at home. Here's a list of phone numbers you might find useful should the unforeseen happen:

Emergency Services:  
**999 or 112**

Housing Executive:  
**03448 920 901**

Northern Ireland Electricity Networks:  
**03457 643643**

NI Gas Emergency Service:  
**0800 002 001**

NI Water  
Waterline:  
**03457 440088**

Flooding Incident Line:  
**0300 2000 100**

Visit **[www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies)** for advice and information on dealing with emergencies.



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# Update on North West flooding repair

Three months on from the unprecedented flooding in the North West region, response organisations have completed a significant level of repair work in the area.



Around 80% of closed roads are now reopened and 750 metres of flood defences repaired; 200 tonnes of debris and rubbish has been cleared from flooded areas; and 28 families have been moved into temporary accommodation while repairs are carried out to their homes.

The vast scale of the area affected is still requiring site assessments and repairs to be carefully prioritised, with priority being given to the busier routes and bridges.

## Department for Infrastructure

- Additional funding of almost £9million has been allocated for the repair of the flood damage to roads and bridges.
- Around 80% of the 60 roads that were closed due to the flooding have now been reopened, and 750 metres of flood defences have been repaired. Further site works are ongoing, with priority being given to the busier routes and bridges and work will continue to reopen the remaining roads as soon as possible.

- Of the 650 bridges in the area affected by the flooding, ninety have been identified as being in need of repair, although most of this work is not significant. Work will continue over the coming months to ensure the integrity of the bridges is maintained and public safety is not compromised.

- Given the disruption associated with the Ballynameen Bridge in Claudy, repair of this bridge is being prioritised. Following engineering assessment and design work, repairs will begin in the next few weeks, with work expected to take around six months to complete.

- Of the 2,900 metres of flood defences damaged almost 70% has now been repaired. Work has been undertaken on many watercourses including the Burdennet River, Muff River and the River Roe, and is continuing in numerous other locations across the North West, including the Faughan River.
- Replacement water level monitoring equipment, washed away due to the very high flows, has been installed on the Owenkillew River and will be on the River Faughan in the coming weeks.



Local farmers helping to pump flood water away

- DfI staff continue to work with other Departments and partner organisations as the recovery continues, including participation in community meetings and DAERA clinics to support and advise the rural community on how to repair the damage caused to rural watercourses that are not maintained by the Department.

## Derry City and Strabane District Council

- More than 200 Council staff inspected over 500 properties affected by the floods as part of the recovery operation. 26 Council owned premises were affected by the floods. The Council's cleansing team was involved in the clean-up of

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flooded areas and removed over 200 tonnes of debris and rubbish.

- Of the properties affected and inspected, 370 were deemed eligible for the Emergency Fund Scheme and over £370,000 worth of payments were made.



(left to right) The Housing Executive's Area Manager, Eddie Doherty and Lettings Manager, Marie Callan hand over keys of their mobile home, to Jacqueline McCready and her daughter, Debbie.

were also on the ground at rural locations including Plumbridge, Newtownstewart, Claudy and Glenelly.

- The Council facilitated a series of briefings for its elected members and local MLAs at the Guildhall, which were attended by representatives of relevant agencies to provide updates and information on the recovery operation.
- An additional £9,500 emergency funding was administered through the Council's community services section to community organisations and charities. Regular multi-agency press releases and twice daily Council operational press releases were issued with hourly updates on social media, as well as an

information leaflet on the Council website.

### Housing Executive

- Eleven families, whose homes were flooded, have been moved into mobile homes in Eglinton. The Housing Executive provided homeless packs including kettles, bedding etc. The families can remain in this temporary accommodation, on council-owned land close to their homes in St Canice's Park, until their properties are ready in the new year.
- The Housing Executive has finished work at three properties in St Canice's Park which were less flooded than others. The families returned home in October.
- The external walls of more severely damaged properties

are still being dried with dehumidifiers, under guidance from a specialist drying contractor. It is hoped to have these properties returned for occupation early in the new year.

- A total of 28 families are currently housed in temporary accommodation, including those in mobile homes. A further two families have been offered, and accepted, permanent accommodation.

### Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

- Officials continue to work with farmers on the ground and have hosted a series of workshops to offer advice on land restoration and flood recovery. DAERA issued two Technical Bulletins to assist farmers and growers in their recovery efforts. The first Bulletin details practical guidance on land restoration and flood recovery and the second provides additional guidance in relation to watercourse management. Further site-specific advice is available from the relevant government Departments and Agencies listed in the Technical Bulletins. **[These can be accessed online here](#)**



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- Further workshops were held in October to deal with winter feeding of livestock, farm management issues, and to help mitigate the risk of fodder shortages on farm businesses affected by the flooding or wet weather. The prolonged wet weather has resulted in a potential shortage of fodder or poor quality silage for some farmers. The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural

Enterprise (CAFRE) hosted a further series of meetings in November to provide farmers with guidance.

- DAERA received permission from the European Commission to raise the level of advanced CAP payment made in October from 50% to 70% of claim value. They commenced making these advanced payments on 16 October to as many farmers as possible who had fully verified claims. The Department made a

particular effort to issue advance payments to businesses affected by the flooding of 22/23 August 2017, with 92% of the affected businesses receiving payment at 31 October.

- DAERA is continuing to explore options on how best to further assist farm businesses affected by the flooding. This is so that the Department is in a position to present an incoming Minister with the evidence regarding the need for a scheme and options

for what that scheme might look like. However, without a Minister, the ability of the Department to progress these options is limited.

It is difficult to predict, with any certainty, the exact locations of heavy, thundery downpours such as those experienced in August. However, on this occasion, established arrangements with response organisations allowed multi-agency support to communities affected by the flooding.



Joan McCaffrey

## Who is... Joan McCaffrey?

In the first of what will be a regular feature

looking at key figures in the Regional Community Resilience Group, Joan McCaffrey explains her role as the first Regional Officer for Local Government Civil Contingencies.

This is a new post, for which the Chief Executives of all eleven council areas across Northern Ireland pushed hard to secure funding.

One of the main roles of the job is to ensure that all councils are engaging, in a joined-up way, with communities at risk from severe weather to look at innovative, but easy ways to help them understand the risk and take action to help themselves and their property.

I previously worked in the west of Northern Ireland and witnessed, at first-hand, the damage to people's homes and property through

flooding and the long-term impacts on their lives. I have also seen the impact of severe weather, where people become isolated and begin to feel vulnerable in their own homes.

As the joint chair of the Regional Community Resilience Group, I am committed to ensuring that all of the public sector is working together to help people understand the risks from severe weather and to be able to take action to reduce the risks affecting their homes and lifestyles.

This is not an easy task, especially with the unpredictable nature

of our weather here in Northern Ireland! However, I have seen the benefits of this work, where communities receive weather warnings, are able to access sandbags and are able to take action within their homes and their communities, to ensure they and their neighbours are prepared as much as possible.

My top tip for resilience is - work with your neighbours to ensure your community is prepared, keep up-to-date with social media, and always think about neighbours who may need extra help, such as the elderly, disabled or families with young children.



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# Take the High Road!

A road improvement scheme, designed to resolve an ongoing flooding problem, has been completed in County Fermanagh.



Resurfacing the new raised section of the B127

The B127 Newbridge Road links Lisnaskea and Derrylin and is one of only two road links across Upper Lough Erne. In times of excessive rainfall, the high water levels in the adjacent lough have resulted in the carriageway becoming flooded and impassable for vehicular traffic.

Attempts had previously been made to raise the road by adding additional surfacing. However, with approximately ten metres of soft alluvial deposits, any benefit was short term as the road settled again, sinking into the soft ground.

Following the flooding of 2016, a decision was made to provide a more sustainable solution. This involved placing 184 concrete piles and constructing a concrete slab to carry the carriageway across the poorest section of the soft ground.

Works were successfully completed in the late spring of 2017 and should ensure that this important transport route remains open to traffic during future periods of high water levels in Lough Erne.

A section of the Wattlebridge Road, prone to flooding, has also been

raised to ensure direct access to a further crossing of the river Erne at Belturbet in Co Cavan.



Concrete is poured to create a slab on the supporting piles

# Getting Risk on Young People's RADAR

The Regional Community Resilience Group is now working in partnership with RADAR NI to make sure that our children know what to do in emergencies.

RADAR, the Risk Avoidance Danger Awareness Resource education centre, opened in Belfast in January 2016. It is a fully interactive centre, teaching safety and life skills using the unique setting of a full sized street, complete with bus, house and train – and it's all indoors.

Children and young people are given the chance to explore dangerous situations in a risk-free environment, to help them learn how to keep themselves safe. Each child receives a range of short

lessons during their visit, covering topics such as personal safety, home safety, fire safety and internet safety alongside life skills such as healthy eating, anti-bullying and money awareness.

The Regional Community Resilience Group is working with RADAR to develop a number of new lessons and resources in relation to community resilience, resilience in flooding situations and general advice that schools can use in relation to being ready

for emergencies. All children who attend RADAR are also given a copy of Northern Ireland's Household Emergency Life-saving Plan and a NI Water stop-tap valve tag to help them be better prepared for emergencies when they go home.

**[Further information on RADAR and arranging for your school or community group to visit can be found at www.radarni.co.uk](http://www.radarni.co.uk)**

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# Useful help and advice for Winter on nidirect

Cold weather can cause a range of difficulties. From frozen pipes to problems with travel, wintry conditions can affect us all.

There is plenty of useful information on nidirect to help prepare for wintry weather and deal with any issues that snow and ice cause.

One of the main things we all have to deal with once the temperature drops is trying to travel safely. These nidirect links will provide information about:

**driving in adverse weather conditions:**  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-adverse-weather-conditions-226-237](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-adverse-weather-conditions-226-237)

**dealing with snow and ice:**  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/ice-and-snow-roads-and-streets](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/ice-and-snow-roads-and-streets)

**There is also more general advice on measures to help you deal with winter:**

**prevent pipes from bursting:**  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/simple-steps-to-reduce-the-risk-burst-pipes](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/simple-steps-to-reduce-the-risk-burst-pipes)

**flooding:** [www.nidirect.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/flooding)

**avoiding slips and falls:** [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/avoid-slips-and-falls-icy-conditions](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/avoid-slips-and-falls-icy-conditions)

**staying warm:** [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/taking-care-winter](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/taking-care-winter)

**staying well throughout the winter:**  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/stay-well](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/stay-well)

You can access useful contact details too, whether you need travel information or if you've a problem with your electricity or water supply.

**You can find lots of information and advice at the following link:** [www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter)

**If you need to contact your local council, you can find their details here:** [www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland)

## Tell us your community resilience success stories!

Do you have any examples of successful community resilience measures that have been implemented in your area and that you would be willing to share in a future RCRG newsletter? If so, we would love to hear about them.

Please send around 300 words and one or two photos to: [RCRG.Newsletter@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:RCRG.Newsletter@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk). We also welcome all feedback, so please email this address if you have any comments or suggestions that we can incorporate into future editions. Please note that this email address should only be used regarding the newsletter and should not be used to report emergencies.

The Department for Infrastructure posts timely updates on traffic & weather events across Northern Ireland. Sign up by clicking the icons:



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