**District Dispatch**

As we all know, our weather is becoming more unsettled throughout the year. During the winter months, we tend to see more rain — which can increase the risk of flooding — as well as sudden cold spells and extreme weather. This is why we are encouraging people to be prepared.

If you have a mobile phone, it’s worth downloading our Chichester District Council app from the Apple app store or the Google Play store. This not only enables you to view your waste and recycling collection dates and sign up to handy reminders, but if you switch your notifications on, you will also receive live updates on your waste and recycling collections. This means that you will be notified if there are any changes to collections due to severe weather, or any other unforeseen problems. You can find out more about this at: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/chichesterdcapp**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/chichesterdcapp)

There are several things we can all do to make sure that our homes, gardens and businesses are ready for the months ahead, and so we have collated some useful tips that we want to share with you.

If you experience a power cut during extreme weather, you should contact your electricity distribution operator by calling 105, and someone will put you through to your area operator.

You can check the flood risk for your postcode area at: [**www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk**](http://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk). In many flood risk areas, you can also sign up for flood warnings by visiting: [**www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings**](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings). These warn of the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, and groundwater. You can receive alerts by phone, email, or text when flooding is expected. Please note that these alerts are not available in all areas.

It’s also worth familiarising yourself with the location of the shut-offs for your mains water, gas and electricity, in case you need to leave your home because of flooding. The location of these varies between properties. Gas shut-off valves are normally beside the meter. The mains electricity cut-off is usually a big red switch on your fuse box. If you can’t find your water stopcock, ask someone with practical experience, or a plumber to help you.

Sometimes no amount of planning and preparation can stop weather events from damaging your property. Insurance offers peace of mind so you know that whatever happens, your home and property is covered. It’s worth checking that your policy is up-to-date and covers what you need.

When high winds are forecast, remember that this can turn everyday items like garden furniture and chairs into dangerous objects. Make sure they are secure, or stored away before a storm or when high winds are forecast.

Before it gets windy or a storm hits, it’s advisable to check your roof for loose tiles, slates and flashing. It’s also worth removing dead branches from old trees. In winter, leaves can build up in your guttering and drainpipes. As a result, water may not drain away properly and will leak into the roof and sides of your house, so you may want to consider having your gutters cleared.

Be prepared for cold weather and make sure water pipes and water tanks in your property are covered with good quality insulation. This will help insulate your hot water system, helping you to save money and protect them from freezing.

Making a list of numbers that you’ll need in an emergency, including local services and loved ones, can also be really helpful. Print or write these on paper in case the situation means you can’t use your phone.

For more advice on how to prepare for emergencies, visit: [**https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/get-prepared-for-emergencies**](https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/get-prepared-for-emergencies). You can also subscribe to Met Office alerts for the very latest weather warnings: [**www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/subscribe-to-email-alerts**](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/subscribe-to-email-alerts), which we also share on our social media pages.

Best Wishes

Cllr Jonathan Brown
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy at Chichester District Council

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