## SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROPERTY MAINTENANCE ISSUES

### “My Heating/hot water/boiler isn’t working”

Before reporting that the heating, hot water or boiler is not working, please be sure to check the following:

1. **The thermostat in the property is set to the desired internal temperature.**

The thermostat is a round dial that displays different temperature settings. It is usually attached to one of the walls inside the property at eye level - generally found in the main hall however its location can vary from property to property. Houses can often have two or three thermostats – one for each floor.

If your heating system is not coming on, the first thing you should check is that the thermostat is correctly set.

Thermostats are often turned down during the summer and forgotten about by the winter or turned down accidentally. For example, the thermostat could be set to five degrees when the desired internal temperature is actually eighteen degrees. The function of the thermostat is to tell the boiler or heating system what temperature you desire internally in your property. Therefore if it is set too low, the boiler believes that it does not have to power on – especially if it is set to a lower temperature then is already in the apartment.

If your heating system is not coming on but you still have hot water, you may need to set the thermostat to a higher temperature.

2. **The radiators are all turned on.**

Each radiator will have a tap-like knob on one side allowing you to turn it on or off and up or down in heat. If you are having trouble turning on your heating system, please be sure to check that all the radiators are turned on before reporting the problem.

NOTE: Usually

3. **The pilot light/flame is lit on the boiler.**

If you have checked and/or set your thermostat to the correct desired internal temperature and made sure that all your radiators are turned on and your heating system is still not coming on, the next thing to do is to check at your boiler itself whether or not there is a pilot flame lit.

Boilers ignite a small flame when turned on. This flame enables the boiler to fire up a larger flame when you turn it on or up. However, the pilot flame can extinguish accidentally by wind.

Every boiler has a 'reset' button or option on its main control dial. This is usually in plain sight on the front of the boiler itself but its location can also vary. If your thermostat is set, your radiators on, your heating is on and the system is still not working, you should attempt to reset the boiler. You can do this by pressing the 'reset' button or turning the dial to the 'reset' option. You should be able to hear the boiler firing up when you do this. It may be necessary to hold the 'reset' option down for a couple of seconds.

On some boilers, you may need to set it to '0' for thirty seconds and you should hear the boiler re-set. On other boilers, there may be a socket near the boiler which reads 'fuse' – you may need to pop this fuse out for thirty seconds to re-set the boiler.

**You are turning the heating on correctly.**

Where a timer is involved, there should be three options: 'constant', 'timed' and 'off'. If the thermostat is set correctly, the radiators are on and the pilot flame on the boiler is lit, when you set the boiler to 'constant', it should come on straight away and remain on until you switch it to 'timed' or 'off'. When you set it to 'timed', it should come on and off automatically at the times that you have set it to do so. Then you set it to 'off' it should not come on at all until you switch it to 'timed' or 'on'.

Timers can be manual or electric. Manual timers are a round dial with a twenty four hour clock setting where you manually move the buttons or pins to set the times where you want the heating to come on and off automatically.

Electric timers can vary but they are relatively easy to figure out even without a manual. There should be options such as;

- '**HW'** – representing the hot water setting
- **'CH'** – Central Heating
- **'24hr'** – Constant heating setting
- **'Timed'** – Timed heating setting
- **'Off'** – Off setting

You should be able to see a small box inside the screen moving between these settings when you press the 'mode' button. There could also be a small box moving between 'CH' and 'HW' so that you can choose whether you are changing the setting for the hot water or central heating. This is however usually found in more modern properties.

Electric timers can often allow for three different times to be set whereas manual timers only usually allow two. Be sure to set the times on a twenty four hour clock basis. You will have to make sure the time itself is set correctly set on the timer and then go through all the hours and minutes (there is usually only three or four buttons) to set the times that you would like the heating or hot water to come on.

**In the case of storage heaters**, there are usually two dials; 'input' and 'output' as well as an 'on/off' switch and a 'boost' switch. The way these heaters work is that they store power during off-peak times (at night) by heating bricks inside the machine in order for you to use this heat during peak times (daytime). Storage heaters often will not work if there is no power stored. You must therefore, store

power during the night so that you can test it in order to determine whether or not it is actually working.

The 'input' dial controls the amount of power that you store. It is recommended that you leave this at a relatively high setting throughout the night so that there is enough power to give heat throughout the day. You do not actually need to turn this dial off at all except for during the summer as it only works at night regardless.

You control the amount of heat that is released with the 'output' dial. It is not necessary to turn this on during the night unless it is particularly cold as when heat usually trickles out while it is being stored.

The 'boost' switch is useful to give a boost of heat when needed.

**In the case of oil fired central heating**, you should check the oil tank to make sure that there is enough oil. It is necessary for the tank to be at least one third full of oil for the central heating to work. You should keep a close eye on the oil as if it goes below this point, the central heating system will become air locked which requires a plumber to call out and release the air in the system. If the system becomes air locked due to the oil tank running dry, it is the tenants' responsibility to organise and settle the plumber's visit to unblock it.

**"I cannot turn on my hot water without the heating coming on as well"**

If you do not have an electric timer with two separate settings for central heating and hot water, there are two other ways to heat water without heating the apartment.

Gas and oil fired central heating systems function by heating water or oil which runs through pipes to the radiators while passing through the water tank in the property, heating that too. If you require hot water but not heat, turn of each of the radiators using the tap on each of them. This way, only the water tank will heat up.

Alternatively, if there is an immersion switch, you could use this instead. This heats the water using electricity and is considerably more expensive. The switch is usually in the hot press as well as inside or outside the main bathroom but its location can vary. An immersion switch is usually two switches together one reading; 'on' and 'off' and the other reading; 'sink' and 'bath' – this can however also vary. You do not have to heat the whole tank if for example you just want to wash the dishes, you can set the immersion to 'sink' and it will only heat half the water which is more economical.

**"I have no water"**

If you find there no water in your property **or** extremely low water pressure compared to usual, the first thing to do is check whether there is any water coming out of the cold water tap in the kitchen sink. The reason for this is that the cold water tap in the kitchen sink runs of the main water supply (from the street).

The next thing to do is to check with your neighbours whether they are having the same problem, especially if your property is an apartment or within a development. These steps help to determine the nature of the problem so that we can determine how to deal with it efficiently. For example, if the problem is with the main water supply, there is no point in sending a plumber to the apartment as they are not authorized to deal with the main water supply. Only the block managers or county council will be able to deal with issues relating to the main water supply.

**"My oven is not working"**

In every kitchen where there is an electric hob or oven, there is usually a red switch on the wall (generally found quite close to the oven). This red switch isolates the power running to the hob and oven so it needs to be turned on in order for the oven to work.

In cases where ovens have a display screen, the time needs to be set in order for the oven to work. Where there has been a power cut, you may have to set this again in order for the oven to work.

**"I have no electricity"**

**Or**

**"My lights/sockets/alarm/fridge (...etc.) isn't working"**

If you find yourself without any electricity or where anything that requires electricity mysteriously and suddenly stops working, please check the fuse box before reporting the problem.

Every property will have its own fuse box which could be in the main hall, utility room or near the front or back door. Their location however can also vary. The power supplies in the property will be divided up and each is powered by a different fuse contained within the fuse box.

**CAUTION: FOR SAFETY, ALWAYS WEAR RUBBER SOLED SHOES AND MAKE SURE HANDS ARE DRY WHEN DEALING WITH ANYTHING INVOLVING ELECTRICITY!**

The fuse box will be in the form of a small white plastic cupboard in a similar location containing a number of identical switches and one larger switch. Again, these may or may not be labelled however the larger switch is the main fuse.

If the electricity goes, you should find the larger switch facing the opposite direction to the others. Unplug all appliances then flick this switch back in the same direction as the others are facing and the power should return. You can then plug all the appliances needed back in one by one and if it goes again, you will know that either the last appliance you plugged in is faulty and/or needs a new fuse or that this is the amount of appliances the system can support at any one time.

If the lights/sockets/alarm/fridge stop working suddenly, please check the fuse box to see if any of the other switches are facing a different way to the rest. If you find that there is, simply turn this switch back to face the same direction as the others. If it trips again, you may need to unplug some appliances and/or turn some of the electrics off to isolate the problem. The switches are usually marked. There may be one for the sockets, one for the lights, a different one for the fridge....etc. By turning things off and flicking the switch, by process of elimination you can determine the cause of system overwhelming which may be a faulty good or the system not being able to support the amount of electricity you are attempting to use at the one time.

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**Please note that you must make sure that there is definitely a problem requiring specialist repairs by trying these simple solutions. Contractors will charge a full call out fee for doing any of these in which case, landlords can pass on unnecessary call out charge to the tenants.**

**If you have one of the above issues and have gone through all of these instructions however still have a problem, please contact the office to report the problem and we will contract a specialist to call to your property and repair the issue.**

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**In case of an emergency:**

If you experience a maintenance emergency outside business hours or on the weekend such as:

- A flood
- A fire
- An explosion
- A building collapse

…you would have to organise a solution to the problem yourself. However please be aware that contractors charge premium prices for call outs outside business hours so it is not advisable to have workmen call out during the weekends unless it is absolutely necessary. Landlords can pass on part of the cost or the full cost of weekend or late night call outs to tenants in cases where the problem is not deemed an emergency and could have waited until our office re-opened.