Property Repairs Handbook

for

Residential Tenants

MATHER JAMIE

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This handbook provides information about the repair service to tenants renting properties through Mather Jamie. It also tells you what you need to know in order to arrange a repair, what repairs you are expected to do and how to do some of these yourself.

You must not attempt anything within this guide which you do not understand or cannot do. If you are in any doubt as to whether any instruction in this guide is appropriate to your individual circumstances, please do not attempt repair.

January 2021

Repairs

Before you contact us about a repair please check the helpful repair tips in this guide as the issue may be something that you can resolve easily yourself.

If you have any reason to believe there are any faults with services/equipment after you have attempted a repair, you should refrain from use and contact Mather Jamie directly.

When you report a repair please let us know:

1. Your name, address and daytime contact number.

2. Details of what needs repairing.

3. When you will be at home for a contractor to attend.

Landlord responsibilities

- **External** - to repair and maintain the structure and outside parts of the property that you live in.

- **Internal** – responsible for water, gas and/or oil pipes, electrical wiring, heating systems, drainage, power and light fittings and any items provided with the property at the start of the tenancy.

- **Garden** – to maintain all fences, walls, gates, outbuildings, sheds, and paved areas originally provided by the landlord.

Tenant responsibilities

- To allow our contractors into your home to carry out repairs, safety checks and inspections.

- To let us know as soon as you notice a repair is needed and to take action to prevent it getting worse.

- To take steps to prevent blockages in wastepipes and drains.

- To arrange (at your own expense) damage repairs caused by you, a member of your household, a visitor or pet.

- To replace door locks or keys when keys are lost, broken or you get locked out.

- To replace broken or cracked glass in windows and doors that has been broken by you during the course of your occupation.

- Replacing light bulbs.

- Testing and replacing batteries in smoke detectors.

- Re-setting trip switches on your electric board.

- Getting open fire and wood burner chimneys swept on a yearly basis.

- Trying to clear blocked sinks, basins, baths and toilets.

- Maintaining gardens and paths.

- Keeping outside drains and gulleys clear from leaves and rubbish.

- Please keep a detailed record of any issues that lead to damage to the property. An accurate record of any incident, including dates/times and any apparent cause will help us to make any insurance claims (were necessary).

Joint safety responsibilities

- Your landlord is responsible for carrying out a gas and oil safety check once a year.

- Your landlord is now also responsible for carrying out an electrical safety check of your property every five years.

These checks are for your safety. If you do not allow access for these checks to be carried out, we may be forced to take action against you.

Emergencies – What to do

Gas (smell, leak or fumes)

- Call National Grid (Gas) immediately on 0800 111 999.
  For safety, use a phone outside your home as using one inside, even a mobile, could spark an explosion.
- Turn off the gas – turn the handle at the gas meter to the flat (horizontal) position.
- Open the windows.
- Do not smoke or light any flames.
- Do not switch anything electrical on or off until National Grid have been out and fixed the problem.

Smoke or fumes or your smoke detector alarm sounds

- If you smell or see smoke call 999 or 112 immediately.
- If there is no sign of smoke or fire, check whether the alarm has been set off by something else.

Electricity

- Turn the mains switch on the consumer unit (fuse board) to **OFF**.
- If you have a power cut call the emergency number on your latest electricity bill.
- We recommend that you keep a torch easily accessible in the event of a power cut. You should test this regularly to ensure the batteries are in working order.

Water

- Turn the mains stop tap to the right (clockwise).
- If you have no water supply, phone your water supplier – the number will be on your most recent water bill.

Criminal damage

- Report it to the police on 999 or 112.
- Make a note of the allocated crime reference number (and ask for one if not proactively provided). Keep this safe and pass to Mather Jamie as soon as possible. Insurers will need this in the event of criminal damage.

Heating
Adjusting heating temperatures

Types of Room thermostats

Room thermostats control the general temperature of your home. A normal comfortable temperature is between 18°c and 21°c.

Once you have set a temperature, the thermostat checks the temperature in the air around it. If the temperature falls below the level set, it switches the heating on and brings the house back up to temperature. When the set temperature is then reached it switches the heating off.

Remember:

- The higher you set the temperature the more fuel you will use.
- In cold weather it is more economic to keep a low heat on all the time.

Thermostatic radiator valves allow you to adjust the temperature in a particular room – the higher the number the more heat is allowed into the radiator.

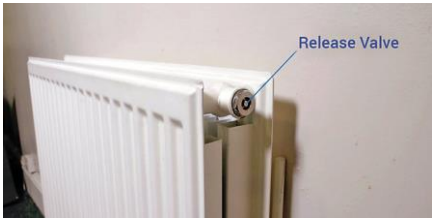
Old style radiator valves work just like a tap - to turn the heat up you turn the valve in one direction (anti-clockwise) and to turn it down or off, you turn the valve in the opposite direction (clockwise).

Boiler Issues

How to reset your boiler

1. Refer to your boiler manual.
2. Push the reset button on the front of the boiler for 10 seconds.
3. Wait 2 - 3 minutes, the boiler should fire up.
4. Repeat twice if the first attempt fails.
5. If the boiler still fails to fire up on the third attempt, it is likely there is a fault with the boiler so please report this to us.

How to bleed a radiator



1. Turn off your heating.
2. Hold a cloth under the release valve and use a radiator key to turn the valve.
3. Re-tighten the valve once any hissing stops and liquid comes out.
4. Turn your central heating system back on.
5. Check the pressure by looking at the gauge on your boiler.

How to defrost a condensate pipe

Some fuel-efficient condensing boilers have a condensate overflow pipe which is located on the outside wall that the boiler is on. If this pipe freezes it will automatically shut the boiler down.

What to do if your condensate pipe freezes:

- Use hot water – **not boiling** – and pour over the end of the pipe where it is frozen, or hold a hot water bottle or heat wrap around the condensate pipe.

- Once the pipe has thawed you should re-set your boiler by pressing the reset button for 10 seconds and waiting for the boiler to re-fire.

How to check if your boiler has low water pressure

Check the water pressure gauge on the front of the boiler. If the reading is less than 1 bar, this is a sign that there is low pressure. The display may also indicate low pressure by delivering a pressure warning or a flashing reading. If you have a hydraulic gauge, then your boiler reading is likely to be on a dial. There will be red sections on the dial which indicate low and high pressure. If the indicator needle is in the red part on the left-hand side, then the pressure is too low. If the needle is in the red section on the right-hand side, then the water pressure is too high.

What is the right water pressure for the boiler?

Ideally, you want to see a reading of between 1 and 2 bars. When your radiators are cold, it is normal to see a water pressure of 1 bar. Anything below 1 bar is considered low pressure, whilst 2.75 bars and above is considered high pressure.

Remember, if you are experiencing high pressure it is best to report the issue to us as soon as possible as the heating system may have been overfilled with water or the pressure release devices could be failing.

Reasons why you have low boiler pressure

Usually, low boiler pressure comes from two main issues:

1. **Bleeding radiators** - Releasing water from your central heating system can lead to a pressure loss.

2. **Leak in heating system** - this leak may be small and barely perceptible, which is why the drop in pressure has been gradual. Look for damp patches near radiators, pipes and from the boiler itself.

How to repressurise your boiler

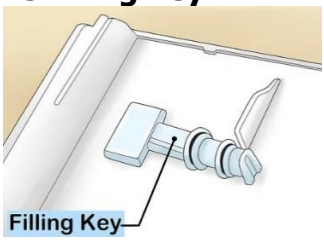
Every boiler is different so you should check the boiler manufacturer's instructions first. If you cannot locate these then most manufacturers' post instructional videos on their website for how to repressurise your boiler which can be useful for a step-by-step guide.

If you have a filling loop:

The filling loop is a small, braided hose with a valve attached. It can be found inside your boiler and its purpose is to allow you to add additional water to the heating system. Because the volume of your system is fixed, adding more water increases the pressure. By opening the filling loop valve and monitoring the pressure as it begins to climb, you can repressurise in just a few seconds, just make sure the valve is firmly shut before firing up the boiler.

1. First, switch off your boiler and give it sufficient time to cool.
2. Check the filling loop, making sure both ends are attached and secure.
3. Open the two valves, you should hear the mains cold water entering the system.
4. Keep the valves open until the pressure reading on your boiler gets to 1.5 bar.
5. Now close both valves, one at a time.
6. Switch the boiler back on. You may also need to press the reset button on your boiler.

If you have a repressure filling key:



1. Switch off the boiler and wait for it to cool.
2. Find the concealed tray underneath the boiler, locate the key and slot.
3. Insert the key into the slot, making sure it lines up with the 'open padlock' signal.
4. Firmly push the key in and turn to the 'closed padlock' sign.
5. Turn the white square nut clockwise so that water flows into the boiler, you should be able to hear this.
6. Keep this going until the pressure rises to 1.5 bars.
7. Now turn the nut clockwise until the water stops.
8. Turn the key back to the 'open padlock' position. Be aware that some water may come out and this is not an issue.
9. Switch the boiler back on. You may also need to press the reset button on your boiler.

If you put too much pressure into your system:

Don't worry if this happens. If you've exceeded the recommended operating pressure by approximately 0.5 bar, you can remove it from the system by bleeding a radiator with a radiator key.

What to do if you continually lose pressure:

If you continually lose pressure, report the problem to us and we will get an engineer to diagnose and repair the problem.

Do not remove the external cover from your boiler or touch any internal parts. If your boiler problem persists, please report the issue to us and we will ask a qualified engineer to attend.

Electric storage heaters

Electric storage heater

Storage heater controls

Storage heaters can be adjusted to suit the temperature required for the room they are in. It can also be possible to set for an extra boost of heat in the afternoon or evening, and in addition there may be a fan boost switch on the side of the heater.

- Storage heaters use electricity at night when it costs less.
- The heat is then released during the day and cools off at night.
- When you change the setting on a storage heater, it needs 24 hours to take effect.

How to set the heat level in a storage heater:

There are two controls on the top of the heater under a hinged cover.

- **OUTPUT** sets when the heat is released. It can be the same all day (gradually cooling off in the afternoon or evening) or you can set it to have a boost in the second half of the day.
- **INPUT** controls the level of heat you need to build up in the heater overnight depending on what temperature you want and whether you want it to have a boost later in the day.

Water Pipes

Stop tap

Tips to prevent frost damage to water pipes:

- Turn off the isolation tap to any outside water taps – this can usually be found on the internal wall from the outside tap and generally under your kitchen sink.

- Leave doors to kitchen and bathroom cabinets open. This will allow warmer air to circulate and reach pipes under sinks and in adjacent outside walls.

- Keep room doors slightly open to allow warm air to circulate around the house.

- If you are going away over the winter period, you are required to ensure the property remains adequately heated in order to prevent frost damage. Central heating systems should be put onto continuous and the thermostat set at 12ºc. If you do not have a thermostat, then the radiator valves or electric storage heaters should be set at a suitable temperature.

- If the weather becomes extremely cold, i.e. below -5ºc, your heating should be put onto continuous and the temperature controlled accordingly. You should also open loft hatches to try and let warm air to your water pipes in the loft.

Dealing with an Emergency:

If the worst happens and you have a burst pipe, then you should try and do the following:

- Turn off the stop tap immediately and open all sink taps to drain off as much water as possible from the system – this is critical to minimising damage.

- Locate any leaks and catch leaking water in containers.

- Report the incident to us at the earliest opportunity.

Clearing blocked sinks, baths & toilets

Bottle trap

U-bend trap

Unblocking a basin, sink & toilet

Blockages in basins and sinks are usually caused by a build-up of waste in the trap - fat, tea leaves, cooking oil, hair etc.

Toilets can get blocked by objects such as wet wipes, nappies and sanitary products – please dispose of such items in your waste and do not flush down the toilet.

The trap always holds some water to stop air and foul smells coming up the drain, however, waste can build up in this and become stuck. Traps can be cleared by unscrewing the bottom as shown in the images above.

If more than one fitting (bath, basin, sink and toilet) is blocked at the same time, then the problem may be in the external drains. If this is the case please report the issue to our office.

We advise using a domestic cleaning product on your sink, bath and basin wastes on a regular basis. Always follow the instructions carefully. **Do not use caustic soda as it destroys plastic fittings.**

To unblock a bath, basin or sink:

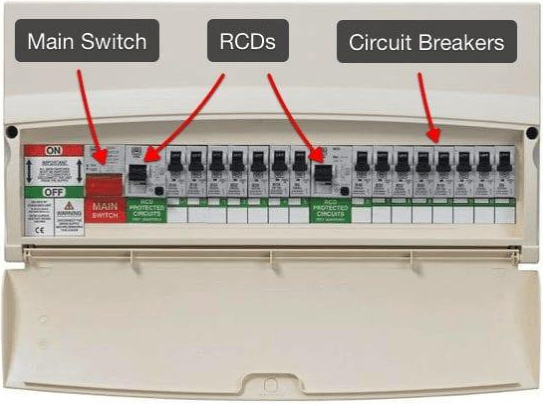
- Scoop out most of the water.
- Hold a cloth tightly over the overflow opening (the hole at the back of the sink or bath).
- Place the plunger over the plug hole and pump it up and down rapidly.

To unblock a toilet:

- If the pan is already full, remove some of the water into a bucket using some form of scoop (e.g. a jug or a cup).
- Push the toilet brush or plunger to the bottom of the pan.
- Pump it up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure which may shift the blockage.
- When the water starts to go down, flush to the toilet to check the blockage has gone.
- You may need to repeat this process several times before the toilet flushes normally. If there is no improvement after a couple of attempts, then report the issue to us.

Always thoroughly wash your hands and equipment after you have finished.

Re-setting a trip switch on your electric



(This advice only applies to modern consumer units. If you have an older 'fuse board' type with rewireable fuses do not touch it and contact us immediately).

Consumer unit (fuse board)

Modern electric circuits are fitted with circuit breakers called trip switches. If a fault develops with your electricity, a switch is tripped and the circuit is broken. You will find all of the trip switches (fuses) in the consumer unit (fuse board). Some consumer units have buttons rather than switches.

A trip switch or button usually turns off the electric because:

- There are too many appliances on a circuit and it is overloaded.
- An appliance is faulty or has been misused, such as a kettle has been overfilled or a toaster not cleaned.
- Water has leaked into a circuit or spilt onto a plug.
- A light bulb has blown.
- An immersion heater is faulty.

Make sure your hands are dry when you touch electrical fittings.

To re-set a trip:

- Open the cover on the consumer unit to expose the trip switches/ buttons.
- Check which switches or buttons have tripped to the **OFF** position and which rooms (circuit) have been affected.
- Put the switches / buttons back to the **ON** position.

If the trip goes again it is probably being caused by a faulty appliance or light. You need to identify which circuit is being affected and the appliance that is causing the problem:

- Check all rooms and note which lights or sockets aren't working.
- Unplug all appliances on the problem circuit and switch off the immersion heater (if you have one).
- Switch or press the 'tripped' switch to the **ON** position.
- Plug in each appliance or switch on each light **one at a time** until the trip goes again.

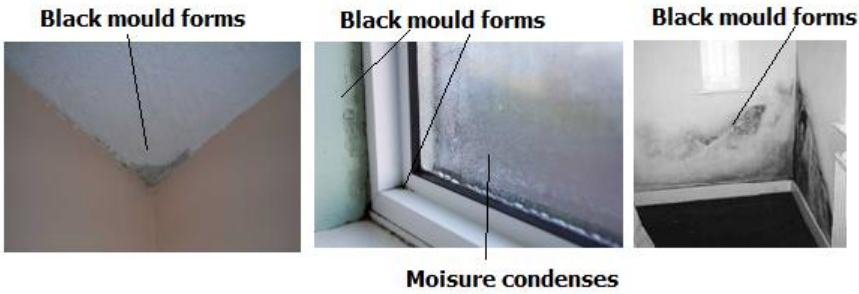
Do not use adapters or multiplug extensions when testing appliances.

If the faulty electrical appliance is one of your own, leave it unplugged and get a qualified electrician or service engineer to check it.

If a wall or ceiling light is faulty, keep it switched off and contact us.

If you can't find the problem and the electric continues to trip please contact us.

Condensation



Condensation starts as moisture produced by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors. This moist air condenses on cool surfaces such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles, windows, and even some fabrics. When moist air is warm it rises and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms where it then forms mould.

If mould forms:

- Wipe the mould off immediately with water. Do not use washing up liquid.
- Apply a recommended product available from a hardware or DIY store. Always follow the instructions carefully. Do not use bleach.

How to control excess moisture:

- Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into colder rooms.
- Open windows when cooking, showering and bathing so that steam can escape, or use an extractor fan if you have one fitted. Leave these on for at least 20minutes after you have finished cooking or washing.
- Open some windows for a while each day and, if you have any, open the trickle vents fitted to your window frames. This allows a change of air.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould forming.
- Do not block air vents.
- Pull furniture away from walls to allow air to circulate.

Tips on how to produce less moisture:

- Cover pans when cooking.
- Dry washing outdoors. If this is not possible, use a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or extractor fan on.
- Do not dry washing directly on radiators.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside.
- Open kitchen and bathroom windows to let steam and moisture out.
- Use an extractor fan, they only use 1/5th of the power of a 100watt bulb.
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when the rooms are in use to stop the warm moist air producing condensation in other cooler rooms.
- Don't clutter wardrobes and cupboards; it could stop the air circulating.
- Don't block ventilators, air bricks and chimneys.
- Don't push furniture against outside walls as these are always colder and attract condensation - make sure there is a 9" (22.5cm) gap.
- Keep the heat on low all day in very cold weather, condensation is less likely to form in warm houses.

Smoke Detectors

Hard wired **Battery only (with battery back-up)**

Smoke detectors are either battery powered or hardwired into your home's electrical system. Nearly all smoke detectors, including those that are hard wired, do contain a battery. Detectors that are hardwired use this battery to provide back-up power in case a fire knocks out the house's electrical power.

Both types of smoke detectors will let out a sporadic beep to let you know when a battery (or back-up battery) is low. This sound is different than the constant blaring fire alarm that sounds during a fire.

To test your alarm:

- Press and hold the test button for a few seconds - the alarm should sound.
- If the alarm does not sound, try cleaning it and test again.
- If the alarm still does not sound, try changing the battery.

If the alarm goes off:

- Check all rooms for signs of smoke.
- Feel around each door before opening. If there is any sign of heat, smoke or noise, don't open the door.

If a fire has broken out:

- Do not attempt to tackle it yourself. Smoke and fumes can kill in minutes.
- Get everyone out of the house and call the fire service (999 or 112).
- Don't go back in for any reason.

If there is no sign of smoke or fire:

Something may have caused the alarm to operate in error. This can happen if:

- Someone smokes near it.
- An aerosol spray is used near it.
- There is excessive cooking smoke or steam, e.g. burnt toast.
- The battery or back-up battery is low.

To replace the batteries:

If your alarm is hardwired, turn off your electric before removing the cover.

1. **Remove the cover or body.** Gently pry the cover open or unclip the body from its base with a slight twisting motion.

2. **Replace the battery.** Unclip the old battery from its holder. Most detectors take a 9-volt battery, use a brand new 9-volt battery as a replacement. Be sure the male and female terminals are properly orientated and clip the battery into place.

3. **Close the cover**. Snap the cover shut or lock the body of the smoke detector back into its base.

4. **Test the detector**. Press the test button on the surface of the detector to make sure the battery is working. When the button is pressed, the detector should beep or chirp.

If you have a hardwired smoke alarm, there is a helpful video tutorial on YouTube that can show you how to change the batteries: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AQvjqhnHTE**

Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy of this guide, no responsibility is taken for any error, omission or misstatement. Mather Jamie additionally accept no responsibility whatsoever for any injury or damage directly or indirectly caused by the failure of any tenant to effectively undertake all steps noted in any part of this guide, action taken that is not appropriate to individual circumstances, action taken that is counter to any manufacturer's guidance or misinterpretation of any of the information herein.