

# Factsheet



## Leaking Radiators

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Modern radiators are made of pressed steel. Victorian radiators were made of cast iron.

Radiators are used to radiate/emit heat from hot water which is pumped around a building to heat it. The principle of radiators is that they should be sized to have an adequate surface area to supply heat to the room in which they are installed.

## Problems That May Arise from a Radiator Heating System

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- **Pressure is too high** - let off water at the boiler/bleed radiator.
- **Pressure is too low** - introduce new water/fill up system at the boiler.
- **Rusting** - Eventually you will need to change radiator (this occurs due to leakage and air (rust is a chemical reaction)).
- **Leakage at inlet pipe** - Tighten up joint.
- **Build up of air** - The system will need occasional bleeding.

## Questions to Ask

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Is the radiator in a communal area or inside your flat?

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If the radiator is in a communal area then it will be the Freeholder/Management Companies responsibility to repair and maintain.

Is the heating system in the block communal or do you have your own boiler?

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If the lessee has their own boiler then the central heating system & radiators will be the responsibility of the Lessee to repair and maintain.



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If the radiator is connected to a communal system then repair and maintenance of it will be the Freeholder/Management Companies responsibility with all lessee's contributing towards repairs via the service charge.

More often than not the radiator valve will be the cause of the leak. This may need tightening or replacing as the thread on the valve may have worn.

## Is the Radiator New or Old and is There Rust Present?

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If it is a new radiator the chances are that it is covered by at least a 5 year guarantee. Radiators should not suffer from rust too badly. However rust can form if the heating system is not maintained, particularly if there is air in the system.

## Urgency of Action Required & Advice for Clients

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Principles:

1. A large leak on a radiator system will stop once the radiators and heating system have emptied themselves of water and will empty gradually by gravity action, with the speed dependant on the size of the hole. This is not the same as a mains water intake leak which should be treated as a priority as (a) it will not stop and (b) it will only get worse.
2. Consider if the system is communal that the effects of gravity drainage will be increased by the size of the building (height) and number of flats.
3. Turn off the inlet into the system to ensure that whilst a leak is ongoing the system is not filling up with new water. Most combination boiler systems will have a filling loop under the boiler which can either be disconnected or the tap to it turned off.
4. Turn off radiators at the valve to where possible contain the water within them rather than leaving them to totally drain down.
5. A small leak such as a dripping radiator is not an emergency and should wait to be dealt with in working hours.
6. For leaks at valves wrap a rag or towell around the leaking valve or put a bowl under the leaking radiator.

## Legal Context (Whose Responsibility?)

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There is a simple rule as to who is liable for repairing or replacing radiators and other elements of a heating system:

1. If it is communal it will be a service charge responsibility



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2. If the system serves just 1 flat, then it will be the Flat owners' responsibility

The obligations of the parties are set out within the covenants of the lease, a covenant being a promise to do or not do something.

An extract from the Landlord's covenants in a lease with a communal heating system is below:  
*"To maintain and renew when required any existing central heating and hot water apparatus in the building and all ancillary equipment hereof other than that contained in and solely serving the Demised Premises."*

