

FREE GUIDE

The Emergency Plumbing Protocol

What to do in the first 10 minutes, before the plumber arrives

- ✓ The 60-second overflow stop
- ✓ Burst pipe checklist, in order
- ✓ Find-your-shutoffs worksheet
- ✓ What to tell the plumber & insurer



Rule #1: stop the water, then think

Water damage gets worse by the minute. Every emergency below starts the same way: cut the water, make it safe, then fix or call.

Emergency	First move (under 60 seconds)
Toilet overflowing	Push the tank flapper down, lift the float, close the valve behind the toilet
Burst or leaking pipe	Close the main water shutoff
Water near outlets / appliances	Switch off that circuit at the breaker, only if you can reach it dry
Sewage coming up a floor drain	Stop using ALL water in the house
Water heater leaking	Close its cold-water inlet valve; turn off gas or power to it

SAFETY FIRST

Never flush a clogged toilet again to 'test' it. That second flush is what turns a clog into a flood.

The 60-second toilet overflow stop

- 1 Lift the tank lid.
- 2 Press the rubber **flapper** at the bottom of the tank closed: water stops entering the bowl.
- 3 Lift the **float** so the tank stops refilling.
- 4 Turn the **supply valve** on the wall behind the toilet clockwise until it stops.
- 5 Gloves on. Soak up water, then disinfect the floor.
- 6 Check the ceiling below for leaks if water went through the floor.

Then clear the clog

- 1 Use a **flange** plunger (the one with the fold-out sleeve), cup fully under water.
- 2 Push slowly first, then 10–15 firm pumps; repeat 3 rounds.
- 3 Still stuck? Use a toilet auger or an air-pressure drain opener.
- 4 If the tub or other drains back up when you flush, it's your main line: call a plumber.



DRAIN GURU TIP

An air-pressure drain opener fires one burst of stored air into the trap. It moves the paper and waste clogs a plunger just rocks back and forth.

See the **Pressure Blaster** at drain.guru →

Burst pipe: the order matters

- ☐ Close the **main water shutoff**
- ☐ Make it electrically safe: breaker off for wet areas (only if you can reach the panel dry)
- ☐ Open the lowest cold taps and flush toilets to drain the lines
- ☐ Turn off the water heater (gas to 'pilot' / breaker off) if the system is drained
- ☐ Move electronics, rugs and valuables
- ☐ Photograph and video the pipe and the damage BEFORE cleanup
- ☐ Call a plumber, and your insurer if damage is significant

PRO TIP

Frozen pipe? Thaw slowly with a hair dryer or warm towels, never an open flame. Other sections may be frozen too.

Sewage backup

- ☐ Stop all water use: no flushing, showers, laundry or dishwasher
- ☐ Keep kids and pets away; gloves and boots for cleanup
- ☐ Call a plumber: this is a main-line problem
- ☐ Photograph everything for insurance

Find your shutoffs (do this today)

Walk the house with this sheet. In an emergency you won't have time to search.

Shutoff	Where it is	Type (wheel / lever)	Tested? ✓
Main water shutoff			
Water heater cold inlet			
Kitchen sink (under)			
Bathroom 1: toilet / sink			
Bathroom 2: toilet / sink			
Washing machine			
Outdoor spigots			
Electrical panel			

- **Wheel (gate) valve:** turn clockwise until snug. Don't force an old one.
- **Lever (ball) valve:** a quarter turn, lever across the pipe = closed.
- Main valve usually sits where the water line enters: basement, crawl space, utility room, garage, or outside in warm climates.

What to tell the plumber (and your insurer)

- ☐ What happened and when it started
- ☐ Which fixtures are affected (one drain, or several?)
- ☐ What you've already tried, especially any chemical drain cleaner
- ☐ Whether the main water is off
- ☐ Photos of the damage and the pipe
- ☐ Ask: flat price or hourly? Trip fee? Emergency rate?

Emergency contacts

Name	Phone
Plumber #1	
Plumber #2	
Water utility	
Electric utility	
Gas company (leaks)	
Insurance claim line	

General information only, not professional or legal advice. Plumbing codes, prices and landlord-tenant laws vary by location. For gas, electrical, sewer-line or structural problems, use a licensed professional. Prices shown are commonly quoted US ranges, not quotes.

KEEP ONE UNDER EVERY SINK

Most plumbing 'emergencies' are one clogged drain.

A clogged toilet at 9 p.m. is the most common call a plumber gets, and the easiest one to handle yourself in minutes.



- Pump, seal, pull the trigger: one burst of stored air
- Built-in pressure gauge, stainless steel barrel
- Heads for toilets, sinks, tubs, showers and floor drains
- No chemicals, nothing to refill

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Clogged Drain Troubleshooting Flowchart

What to try, drain by drain

Landlord & Tenant Plumbing Kit

Signs, checklists and lease clauses

12-Month Drain Maintenance Calendar

Ten minutes a month