Letting Agents Handled Three Times As Many Calls From Tenants In First Quarter Of 2014 As Storms Battered The UK

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Letting agents handled almost three times as many calls from tenants reporting property damage and requesting urgent repair work in the first quarter of 2014 compared to the previous quarter as winter storms battered large swathes of the British Isles.

According to figures compiled by Fixflo.com, a smart property repair reporting system that enables tenants to report maintenance issues to letting agents online, letting agents and block managers had to cope with a 181% rise in the number of tenant reports during that period (Q1 2014 vs Q3 2013).

The level of calls from tenants living in the South West were particularly high during the period December 2013-March 2014 as the area experienced some of the most extreme weather in living memory and subsequent widespread flooding.

Agents in the South West fielded 83% more calls relating to roof (broken and missing tiles), and 70% more internal wall and ceiling (damp patches) damage than the national average for that time of the year.

Across the UK, the number of roof related issues reported by tenants in the last quarter of 2013 versus the first quarter of 2014 more than doubled, as gale force winds caused substantial damage to many properties.

Over the past six months, tenants have reported a wide range of maintenance issues to letting agents from blocked pipes to mice and rodent infestation. March experienced the highest level of reports by tenants, most likely due to the after effects of several months of extreme and unprecedented weather.

The most common issues reported by tenants during that past six months related to the bathroom (15.6%), kitchen (11.2%) and heating systems (7.9%). Just over a quarter (26%) of bathroom issues related specifically to the toilet, such as the cistern not working properly or blocked pipes. One in five (20%) bathroom issues were shower related.

Tenants in the North East seemed particularly susceptible to bathroom related problems, with almost a quarter (24%) of all issues reported. That compared to just 13.6% of issues being bathroom and toilet related in the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside.

* They say in London, you're never more than six feet from a rat – a horrible thought! And according to Fixflo figures, more than twice as many tenants in London reported problems with mice, rat and insect infestation than the national average over the past six months.

Rajeev Nayyar, managing director of Fixflo.com comments:

"The UK experienced some of the worst weather since records began last winter, and not surprisingly maintenance requests by tenants went through the roof.

"Winter time inevitably sees a rise in tenants calling to report problems as boilers break down and water pipes burst due to the cold weather, but this year rental properties had to stand up to the added problem of gale force winds and rising water levels. Managing agents have never been so busy repairing the damage after the storm.

"What this period of bad weather highlights is the benefits of tenants and letting agents having a simple and robust repair reporting process in place to ensure repairs are addressed and carried out as quickly as possible. As part of that process it is crucial that tenants have the ability to report problems out of hours because inevitably things will go wrong when the agent isn't available.

"For letting agents, having an effective reporting system in place means they can decide at a glance which repairs are urgent and need addressing straight away and which are non-critical and can be addressed at a later date."

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