

[Delay in the issue of rate bills](#)

There will be a delay in the issue of rate bills for 2017/2018. Plans are being put in place to allow bills to be sent out in May.

Letter to ratepayers

Usually at the beginning of April each year Land & Property Services (LPS) send annual rate bills to homes and businesses across Northern Ireland. This year, bills will be late due to a delay in the setting of the Regional Rate.

From the end of this week, LPS will be sending a letter to every ratepayer about the delay of 2017/2018 rate bills with advice and further information for ratepayers.

You can find details on this page:

Rate bill in May

The bill sent next month will cover rates assessed from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, as well as any unpaid rates from previous years.

If you normally pay by Direct Debit, you don't need to do anything. No direct debit payments will be taken until a new bill is issued.

If you normally pay by Standing Order, online, or by cheque, LPS would encourage you to make a payment based on last year's assessment.

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[Remember to put clocks forward this weekend](#)

Date published: 29 March 2019

Make sure you remember to put your clocks forward this weekend, as British Summer Time begins on Sunday (31 March). While you may get an hour's less sleep, on the plus side evenings will now be lighter for longer.

Reset clocks on Saturday night

At the moment we are on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). At 1.00 am on Sunday (31 March) the clocks will go forward an hour as we move to British Summer Time, meaning it will be 2.00 am.

You should reset your household clocks, watches and time-based equipment on Saturday night, so you don't spend Sunday trying to figure why you're late. The equipment you may need to reset includes:

- clocks – especially alarm clocks
- central heating and hot water timers
- your mobile device and computer (if their time zone settings do not

instruct them to automatically take the correct local time from the internet)

British Summer Time ends on the last Sunday in October, at 1.00 am Greenwich Mean Time.

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Dangers of eating too much salt

It's Salt Awareness Week (20 to 26 March). The Public Health Agency (PHA) is reminding everyone of the dangers of eating too much salt and asking everyone to check food labels to see how much salt is in food.

High blood pressure

Too much salt in your diet can contribute to [high blood pressure](#) – also known as hypertension.

Hypertension often has no symptoms, but if you have the condition, you are more likely to develop heart disease or have a [stroke](#).

A very small amount of salt is an essential part of your diet. However, often without realising it, most of us are eating too much.

It is recommended that adults eat no more than six grams of salt a day (about a teaspoon) and children should have even less.

Using less salt

You can take greater control by simply using less salt during cooking and tasting food at the table before adding [salt](#), rather than doing this automatically.

However, it is important to realise that 75 per cent of the salt you eat is already in the food you buy.

Ready prepared and processed foods can be high in salt. For example, a tin of

cream of chicken soup can contain 1.9g of salt – almost a third of the recommended daily amount in just one tin.

Ready meals and snack foods, such as crisps, in particular can be very high in salt. By reading product labels before you buy, you can choose the products that are lower in salt and better for your health.

‘Traffic light’ food labels

If a product uses the ‘traffic light’ indicators on its packaging, try to go for products marked green or amber for salt content, and stay clear of products marked red for salt.

For foods that don’t use red, amber and green labels, more than 1.5g salt per 100g is high in salt; between 0.3g and 1.5g has medium salt content; and 0.3g salt or less per 100g is low in salt.

Reducing the amount of salt you use in cooking doesn’t necessarily mean less flavoursome meals. You can replace salt with alternative flavourings such as pepper, lemon juice, herbs, and spices.

The PHA’s [Choose to Live Better](#) website has further advice and tips on eating well and getting active.

Salt tips

Read the salt content on the label – look at the amount of salt per 100g:

- more than 1.5g salt per 100g is high in salt (red)
- between 0.3g and 1.5g is medium (amber)
- 0.3g salt or less per 100g is low salt content (green)

Many food labels list ‘sodium’ rather than salt. To convert this to the amount of salt, multiply the amount of sodium listed by a factor of 2.5. For example, if a food label says a product has 0.6g of sodium, it contains 1.5g of salt.

Adults should eat no more than 2.4g of sodium per day, as this is equal to 6g of salt.

Children should eat less than an adult’s daily recommendation of six grams, but how much differs with age so it’s important to keep an eye on how much salt is already in manufactured foods:

- one to three years – no more than 2g of salt per day
- four to six years – no more than 3g of salt per day
- seven to 10 years – no more than 5g of salt per day
- 11 years and over – no more than 6g of salt per day

Babies under a year old should have less than 1g of salt a day.

If a baby is breastfed, they will get the right amount of minerals, including

sodium and chloride, from breast milk. Formula milk contains a similar amount of sodium to breast milk.

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[Take care driving in wintry conditions](#)

With wintry weather forecast, icy roads, sleet and snow could make driving conditions more difficult in some areas. Always adjust your driving according to the conditions and plan your journey. Reduce your speed and drive with extra care, even when roads have been gritted.

Drive to suit the conditions

During adverse weather, you should:

- clear ice and snow off all windows, lights and vehicle roof before you set off
- use at least dipped headlights in poor visibility
- leave extra space between you and other vehicles
- be extra cautious at road junctions where road markings may not be visible

Even after roads have been treated in winter, driving conditions may remain challenging, especially if the road location and layout mean there is a high risk of ice. Be aware that ice forms more easily on:

- hilly or exposed roads
- roads that pass under or over a bridge
- roads shaded by trees or buildings

Try not to brake suddenly in icy conditions – it may lock up the wheels and you could skid.

If you start to skid:

- release the brake pedal fully or ease off the accelerator
- steer into the skid
- as you straighten, steer back along the road

You can find out more about driving in wintry conditions at the page below:

Check and service your vehicle

You can reduce your chances of breaking down by regularly servicing your car. You should also:

- top up anti-freeze and screenwash
- check for wear and tear on wiper blades (replace them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows)
- make sure your battery is fully charged (batteries last between two and four years – replace yours if it's no longer reliable)
- keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level and check you have at least 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the breadth of the tread and around the entire circumference
- wipe dirt and spray off headlamps and make sure all bulbs are working

Winter kit

During winter you are advised to carry a winter kit in your vehicle. It should include:

- ice scraper and de-icer
- torch and spare batteries (or a wind-up torch)
- warm clothes and blankets
- boots
- first aid kit
- jump leads for the car battery
- a shovel (if there's a chance of snow)
- road atlas
- sunglasses (the low winter sun and glare off snow can be dazzling)
- warning triangle

If you're planning a long trip or if severe weather is forecast, you may want to also have in your car:

- any medication you need to take regularly
- food and a thermos with a hot drink

Is your journey necessary?

You should always plan your journey and check the latest weather and travel advice.

If the conditions are bad, ask yourself whether you really need to travel – or if you can delay your journey until conditions improve.

If you must travel, plan your journey carefully.

Traffic information

However carefully you plan your journey, things can go wrong. An accident or bad weather could mean that a road is closed for a time.

You can get up-to-date traffic information at the following link:

If you find yourself on a stretch of road that is closed, stay in the car and listen to traffic news.

Driving and walking in flooded areas

Do not travel in heavy rainstorms unless absolutely necessary.

In flooded areas, drivers should not:

- enter flood water that is moving or is more than four inches deep
- under any circumstances, drive through fast-flowing water as the car could be swept away

In more shallow but passable water:

- slow down
- avoid creating bow waves which can damage your car engine; and
- remember to test the brakes after leaving the water

Do not attempt to walk through flooded areas. Even shallow water moving fast can sweep you off your feet and there may be hidden dangers such as:

- open drains
- damaged road surfaces
- submerged debris; or
- deep channels which can result in serious injury or, in the worst cases, death

If you do become stranded in flood water and you feel there is a risk to life, dial 999 for emergency assistance.

More useful links

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