



## No more Mr ice guy

### Dave Green from Heat Mat Ltd looks at the opportunities presented by the recent cold weather.

**T**he freezing weather conditions in the early part of the year caused disruption to businesses and homes alike – burst pipes, iced up gutters and treacherous car parks and walkways. Many businesses suffered as a result and the cost to the UK economy is still being calculated.

These issues have created many opportunities for electrical contractors as the volume of enquiries for trace heating and snow melting systems has surged to unprecedented levels.

There are a variety of systems that electricians can supply and install to prevent many of the problems associated with cold weather and the associated snow and ice. Over the coming year, whilst the cold spell is still prominent in people's minds, there are

fantastic opportunities to supply cold weather systems and capitalise on the current demand.

The systems on offer fall into two main categories; retrofit items that can be easily added to current infrastructure, such as trace heating and gutter clearance systems, and products that require a significant amount of building work to install, such as heating systems for car parks or loading ramps.

#### Trace of spades

The main retrofit systems are designed to prevent water freezing in pipes and gutters. Pipe heating systems are often low cost and use a heating wire that is wrapped around the water pipe and covered with lagging to

prevent frozen and burst pipes. The systems either use self-limiting cables (trace heating), or cables with an integrated bi-metallic strip thermostat.

Industrial gutter clearance systems either use conventional heating cables or trace heating to provide the warmth to ensure gutters do not freeze up. This ensures the façade of the building does not suffer ice damage and perhaps more importantly in these litigious times, prevents dangerous build ups of ice which could cause serious injury if they become loose and hit someone.

Specialist thermostats that measure both the ambient air temperature and the moisture level in the gutter should be used, ensuring the systems only power up when required.

# Heating

Beat the cold weather

## Ground force

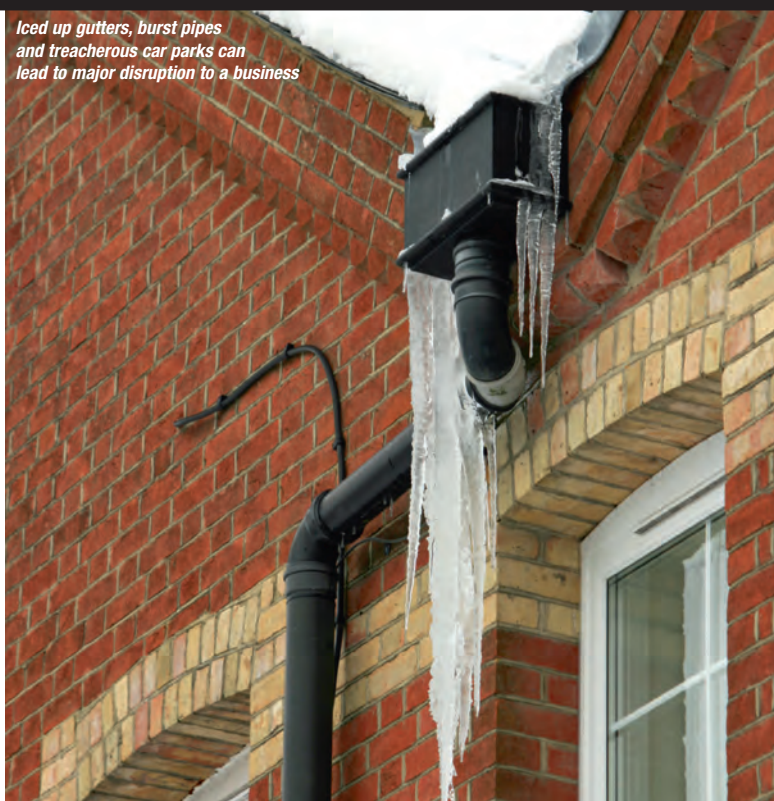
Ground heating systems are used for ensuring areas such as walkways, car parks, drives and loading ramps are kept free from frost, snow and ice. Whilst the heating and control gear is installed by an electrician but, as they do require installation beneath the area they are to heat, some building work is required resurfacing over the heating.

These products are supplied in loose cable or mat format, have an output of 270W/sqm and are supplied in 240V and 450V ranges. The heating is controlled by intelligent thermostats, again sensing moisture and temperature, and this ensures the walkways and car parks are always free when the first employee or customer arrives in the morning. These systems are particularly suitable for hospitals, schools and nursing homes where there is a very high duty of care to people on their premises.

These systems offer remarkably good value for money. After all, a £3,000 snow melting system installed in a car park can be very good value for money if, without it, the business would have to lose a day's sales.

*For details of Heat Mat's ice and snow melting systems using OJ Electronics' specialist thermostats circle readerlink 166*

*Iced up gutters, burst pipes and treacherous car parks can lead to major disruption to a business*



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