



For immediate release: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2011

## **BOILER BOTHER LEAVES HOUSEHOLDERS FACING £320 BILL**

- **Boiler bother: a fifth of households (22%) suffered a broken down boiler last year - average cost of repair was £320<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **At risk: almost six in ten households (58%) don't have boiler cover<sup>[2]</sup> potentially facing a large bill if their boiler breaks down**
- **Firing up: over half of households will have put their heating on by the end of this week<sup>[3]</sup>, as Britain braces for winter<sup>[4]</sup>**
- **Boiler cover costs as little as £89 a year<sup>[5]</sup> – offering a £231 saving compared to the average cost of repair<sup>[1]</sup>.**

With over half of households due to switch their heating on by the end of this week<sup>[3]</sup>, [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), the independent price comparison and switching service, reveals that almost six in ten households (58%) have no boiler cover in place<sup>[2]</sup>. This is despite the fact that a whopping one in five boilers (22%) broke down last winter, leaving householders £320 out of pocket on average<sup>[1]</sup>.

With stretched Brits squeezing every penny, almost half (48%) view boiler cover as an unnecessary expense<sup>[6]</sup>. But this strategy backfired for many households last year. In fact, one in five people (21%) considering taking out boiler cover this year are doing so because they faced a large bill when their boiler broke down and they now believe that cover works out cheaper than paying for repairs<sup>[7]</sup>.

Over a quarter (28%) of those planning to take out boiler cover are looking for peace of mind as they are worried that this winter will be another cold one, while a third (34%) simply can't afford any surprise bills<sup>[7]</sup>. And with the cost of cover starting at £89 a year or just under £8 a month this could be a better option for those on a tight budget, offering a £231 saving compared to the average cost of repair<sup>[1]</sup>.

**Kevin Sears, energy expert at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** “As household budgets continue to be squeezed, consumers may be tempted to make savings wherever they can. However, going without boiler cover could leave you strapped for cash if your boiler packs up and you don’t have the money spare to pay for repairs. The average repair bill last year was £320. If this would be difficult for you to find then boiler cover could give you peace of mind.

“If boiler cover is the right option for you then it is vital to shop around for the best deal. Prices and the level of cover can vary, with some suppliers also including an annual boiler safety inspection. As well as saving money this could also potentially protect your family’s health. The other point to consider is that you are not obliged to take boiler cover through your gas supplier – you really are free to shop around to take advantage of a deal that suits your household’s needs.”

Supplier	Plan Name	First Year Cost	Monthly Cost	Maximum cover per year	Safety Inspection (includes initial and annual)
HomeServe	EasyPay Gas Boiler Breakdown Cover	£89.16	£7.43	Unlimited	X
npower	Hometeam 50 Boiler care Flexi	£126.00	£10.50	Unlimited	✓
HomeServe	Gas Boiler Breakdown Cover	£132.60	£11.05	Unlimited	X
npower	Hometeam boiler care	£144.00	£12.00	Unlimited	✓
ScottishPower	Home Comfort Standard Care	£154.80	£12.90	Unlimited	✓
SSE	Shield Boiler and Controls	£154.80	£12.90	Unlimited	✓
British Gas	HomeCare 100	£156.00	£13.00	Unlimited	✓
E.ON	Boiler & Controls Care Option 1	£159.00	£13.25	Unlimited	✓

Source: [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com). Prices correct as of 23/09/2011. All plans cover boiler and controls. Based on a 5 year old Baxi Gas combination boiler with no existing cover in Nottingham.

### **uSwitch.com’s top heating cover tips**

- 1) You don’t have to sign up for heating cover with your standard gas supplier, choose the most appropriate cover to suit your needs
- 2) An annual service and safety inspection helps reduce the chance of fatal carbon monoxide leaks and improves energy efficiency
- 3) Boilers that are not regularly serviced will produce less heat from the gas consumed, which in turn means they cost more to run
- 4) Often, a boiler will break down without warning. Sometimes when one part starts to go wrong other problems rapidly follow. Here are a few tell-tale signs to watch out for:
  - a. The radiators don't get as hot as they should
  - b. It takes a long time to get hot water from the taps
  - c. Strange banging noises could mean trouble, so call for help straight away
- 5) To help prevent boiler bother, you can:
  - a. Make sure that you keep the whole area around the boiler clean

- b. Have regular maintenance checks
  - c. Don't overheat your house
- 6) Turning your central heating thermostat down by 1 degree Celsius could save you up to 10% on bills
  - 7) Replacing an old conventional boiler with a high-efficiency condensing boiler will save you around a third on your heating bill, and up to 40% with the right heating controls
  - 8) Carbon Monoxide is the 'silent killer' - poisoning can be avoided by ensuring that fuel-burning appliances have the correct level of ventilation. Never allow chimneys or air vents to become blocked. Have your appliances checked by a Gas Safe Register engineer once a year.

**For more information visit [www.uSwitch.com](http://www.uSwitch.com) or call 0800 093 06 07**

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**Notes to editors:**

1. When asked "did your boiler break down last year", 14.6% answered "yes, once", 4.3% answered "yes, twice", 1.5% answered "yes, three times" and 1.9% answered "yes, more than three times". This means 22.3% of households suffered a boiler breakdown last year. Average cost of repair was £320.
2. When asked: "do you have boiler cover?" 36.5% of people responded "yes" and 5.4% said 'don't know' leaving 58.1% of people without boiler cover.
3. When asked "when do you expect to turn your heating on?", 17.5% answered "I already have" while 34.8% answered "by the start of October", which in sum is 52.3%
4. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2039418/UK-weather-Snow-forecast-parts-Britain-early-October.html>
5. See table in release above.
6. 13.2% of respondents said boiler cover was unnecessary while 34.8% said it was too expensive – these add up to 48%
7. When asked "why are you considering getting boiler cover this year", 21% of people answered "I had to pay last year when my boiler broke down, the cover would work out cheaper". 28.2% answered "I'm worried that this winter is going to be cold and I want piece of mind that I'm protected" and 34.3% of people answered "I wouldn't be able to afford any surprise costs this winter".

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uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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