

What is a Powerflush?

A Powerflush is a cleansing process, which aims to remove deposits of sludge, rust and any other debris from your central heating system.

These contaminants, if left, can seriously affect the efficiency of a heating system and, in severe cases, a Powerflush could be the only option available. Over time the water in your pipes, boiler and radiators deposits unwanted by products like rust. This rust (plus other dirt and debris) becomes an unpleasant, mud-like substance that professionals affectionately refer to as 'sludge'. Sludge in your heating system can cause to blockages and corrosion, which will lead to both inefficiency and / or breakdown. In extreme cases it can be so damaging that a complete boiler replacement is needed.

When Do You Need A Powerflush?

If you carry out regular servicing and maintenance (professional servicing is recommended annually) then a preventative Powerflush should only be necessary every 5-6 years to clear debris and prevent significant blockages from taking hold.

However, this will vary depending on the system you have. For example, some boilers use copper heat exchangers rather than stainless steel, which will corrode quicker.

IMPORTANT: If you are planning to replace your boiler it's important that the engineer performs a Powerflush before the installation. Otherwise, you risk contaminating the new boiler with damaging sludge and debris that's hanging around in the old pipework.

Signs You Need a Powerflush

There are signs to look out for that suggest that all is not well in your central heating system.

- Cold areas on radiators e.g. at the bottom
- Excessive noise from the boiler or the heating system pump
- Discoloured water when you bleed the radiators
- Heating is slow to warm up
- Cloudy tap water (limescale in system)
- Some radiators struggle to heat up as well as others
- Radiators cold but pipes are hot
- Boiler regularly shuts down and needs restarting
- No water escapes when you bleed a radiator
- Noisy radiators and or / boiler
- Small leaks in radiators.

If any of these problems sound familiar to you, it's time to contact a professional engineer. While a Powerflush may be all that is required to get your heating back on track, unfortunately it's not always that simple. A system may be so damaged that it is actually cheaper to replace rather than repair.

What Are the Benefits of a Powerflush?

It's not all doom and gloom; there are lots of positive reasons to get a Powerflush carried out too.

- Radiators will heat up quicker
- Radiators will get hotter
- Quieter radiators / boiler
- More energy efficient system = cheaper energy bills
- Higher hot water temperatures
- More reliable i.e. less chance of breakdown
- Increase the life of your heating system.

How Does a Powerflush Work?

An engineer will connect a pump to your central heating system. If it's a Combi it will be connected at the pump head but if it's a System boiler it will be connected at the circulation pump. This pump will push special chemicals through the pipes, boiler and radiators.

This includes a chemical that will remove sludge and rust, a de-scaler to remove limescale and corrosion inhibitor to help prevent future rust from forming. The engineer will collect and dispose of any contaminated water, debris or particles that they remove from the system.

The engineer may also use special tools on the exterior of the radiator to dislodge stubborn blockages. They should be able to measure the temperature of your radiators before they have started work and then show you the improvement after the Powerflush.

The whole process can last anything from 6 – 10 hours depending on the number of radiators in your home, the age of the system and the severity of the sludge in the system. The engineer may find more problems than originally anticipated such as needing new parts to replace those that have been damaged beyond repair. Most Powerflush jobs can be completed in one day but some of the more severe cases may require longer.

A qualified engineer will be able to perform repairs, replacements and carry out a Powerflush.

Who Should Carry Out a Powerflush?

Not all companies will perform a Powerflush to the same standard. There are a range of chemicals and equipment on the market and, as with all industries, there are providers with varying levels of expertise and attention to detail.

Can You Perform a Powerflush Without a Professional?

Put simply, not really.

While there are Powerflushing kits for hire and instructional videos available on the internet, it's a risky and complicated job. A professional will make a Powerflush look easy, clean and safe but the reality is it's a job that has the potential to get very messy. Specialist chemicals and equipment should only be handled by those trained to do so.

It's also possible that carrying out the work on your heating system by yourself may invalidate any manufacturer's warranty you have.

If the work is completed incorrectly it could cause more damage than you had to begin with.

NOTE: Installing a magnetic filter will not deliver the same benefits as a Powerflush procedure, but it can protect a system (that is still working well) from future sludge blockages.

How Much Will a Powerflush Cost?

There are lots of factors that will affect the price of a Powerflush such as size and complexity of the heating system, not to mention any incidental troubleshooting that crops up. A Powerflush can cost anything between £300 to £1000+ but will also vary from engineer to engineer.

Sometimes there will be additional costs like extra descaler chemicals or replacing the TRVs.

It's important that your central heating system is as efficient as it can be at all times and, although a Powerflush can be an expensive process, it can also save a lot of money over time in reduced heating bills.

Is a Powerflush Always the Solution?

In some particularly severe cases you may find that it's actually more cost effective to replace the system than carry out a Powerflush. A Powerflush will not fix broken parts. If a blockage has caused a part to break that will add time and cost to the job to get the system back to optimum performance. A professional will be able to advise you if this is the case.

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