



**Workforce**

## **Adverse Weather Policy**

# Aim

The Adverse Weather Policy sets out expectations where severe weather compromises an employee's safety. This may also impact their ability to attend their workplace.

# Scope

This policy applies to all employees. It also applies to workers i.e. bank, agency and sessional workers. References to employees should be taken to apply to workers unless otherwise stated.

This policy complies with current legislation and meets the aims of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) of the [Equality Act 2010](#).

# Definitions

**Adverse weather events** are defined by reference to the Met Office Weather Warning system as set out in the [Adverse Weather Policy : guide for managers](#). However, this Adverse Weather Policy applies when:

- Severe weather means employee cannot get to their normal workplace.
- Severe weather poses a significant risk to the health, wellbeing and safety of employees.

Note that adverse weather includes extreme summer temperatures.

# Roles and responsibilities

There is a range of standard expectations which underpin all policies. [Read more about standard roles and responsibilities](#). In addition, the following specific responsibilities apply to this policy.

# Employer

The employer should:

- Consider the health, safety and wellbeing needs of all employees.
- Notify employees when a weather warning has been issued by the Met Office.

- Set out clearly what employees and managers should do when Met Office weather warnings are issued.
- Identify the designated decision makers within the organisation, making sure delegated authority is at the appropriate level.
- Make sure managers and service managers are aware of resilience arrangements being put into place to maintain essential service provision.

## **Manager**

The manager should:

- Consider the health, safety and wellbeing needs of their employees.
- Carry out suitable risk assessments in advance of predicted adverse weather, where required.
- Make sure that all decision-making is guided by the principle of reasonableness and safety, taking a person-centred approach.
- Take all practicable steps to maintain effective communications with all employees.
- Have an awareness of their employees' circumstances and proposed travel arrangements.
- Where bad weather stops staff from reaching their normal workplace, they should identify an alternative location to work from. Any such location must be safe and suitable.
- Identify alternative locations to work from where weather conditions prevent employees from getting to their usual workplace. This should be an appropriate, safe, and viable alternative.
- Encourage flexible working practices for those who can, to work from home
- Make employees aware of arrangements for maintaining essential service provision.

## **Employee**

The employee should:

- Take responsibility for their own health and safety when travelling for work. This applies to their commute to and from work and any travel that is a routine part of their job.

- Plan ahead, particularly if a weather warning has been issued. They should also consider alternative options for travelling to and from work.
- Make every reasonable effort to attend work in the event of adverse weather.
- Maintain effective channels of communication with their line manager or designated manager and colleagues. Engage with training and development programmes integral to any role that they subsequently accept.
- Raise any concerns or issues as soon as possible or during any trial period to enable early discussion and resolution.
- Highlight any change of circumstances to their manager.

## **Planning for adverse weather**

Service managers and line managers should make themselves aware of the likely impact of anticipated adverse weather. They should consider the condition of local roads, infrastructure, and public transport links.

Managers should act early to mitigate anticipated impacts. While it can be difficult to predict the exact impact on services, all employees should avoid unnecessary travel to stay safe.

Managers can also consider rearranging or swapping shifts. They should also establish arrangements for employees to confirm they have arrived safely after travelling to and from work locations.

## **Provision of essential services**

NHS Scotland provides essential services in hospitals, clinics, and the community that must continue to operate during extreme weather.

Decisions on which services are essential will follow local and national resilience planning arrangements and will consider the needs of service users. These decisions must be reviewed and communicated regularly during the adverse weather event.

When reviewing service needs, managers should use a person-centred approach and consider the individual circumstances of each employee.

Employees should not take unnecessary risks to get to work. They must always consider if it is safe for them to travel.

Decisions to close or change service provisions should be made as early as possible. All affected employees must be informed of these changes.

Employees who drive for work must assess whether it is safe to make their journeys and should discuss this with their line manager.

Employees and managers should work together to assess and manage risks continuously. If they continue to work, employees must contact their manager regularly with updates, including their location.

If a service is suspended, employees may be redeployed to help maintain other essential services. Employees may also be asked to work from another location or from home if their role allows it. If an employee cannot be redeployed or work from another location, they will still receive full pay for their shift.

## **Provisions for working at other sites**

When adverse weather is anticipated, health boards should have contingency plans in place. These plans should allow employees to be deployed to other workplaces within the same health board.

Employers should produce a list of alternative deployment options when developing standing arrangements. This list should be shared with service managers and line managers to help with deployment.

When deploying employees to another location, the priority must be their health, safety, and wellbeing and that of service users.

Deployment to another site depends on the systems and infrastructure available. Boards must make sure that security and risk management arrangements are maintained.

If an employee cannot get to their usual workplace, they must contact their line manager or a designated service manager as soon as possible. The manager may ask them to attend an alternative NHS facility, but this requires the agreement of that facility.

## **Provision for working across board boundaries**

Existing arrangements for deploying employees across health board boundaries will continue to apply. Any cross-board deployment must

meet all health, safety, security, risk management, and management requirements.

## **Arrangements for working at home**

Whether an employee can work from home depends on several factors. These include their role, whether they have the right equipment to work safely, and if they are needed for essential services elsewhere.

## **Provision for those remaining on the premises**

If an employee is stranded at work or cannot get home due to travel disruption, the employer will provide suitable accommodation at no charge. The type and availability of this accommodation may vary depending on the location and circumstances. The employee's health, safety, and wellbeing will always be the priority.

In these situations, regular meals and drinks should also be provided. Employees must not be told to stay at work after their normal hours if they can safely get home.

An employee may agree to stay at the premises to cover for colleagues who are unable to travel. If so, they must be given meals, drinks, and either appropriate pay or time off in lieu. Employers must also follow the Working Time Regulations, which state that employees are entitled to a rest of at least 11 consecutive hours in any 24-hour period.

## **Provision for shorter working hours**

Managers should consider letting employees leave early, while still maintaining essential services. This can include changing shift change-over times. Managers should also consider all reasonable requests to leave early, especially from employees who have a long journey.

If an employee leaves early in these circumstances, they will be paid for their full shift. Where possible, managers should stagger leaving times for large groups of staff to avoid causing more disruption.

Employees who will be late for work due to bad weather should contact their manager as soon as possible. Employees who are late because of travel problems will still be paid for their full shift. If official advice is to

avoid peak travel, managers should be flexible with working patterns to help employees travel safely.

Employees must not suffer any detriment for arriving late or leaving early due to travel disruption. To support essential services, employees should be encouraged to come to work if it is safe, even if they cannot work a full shift.

## **Provision for special leave**

Employees may access paid special leave if severe weather prevents them from attending work. Special leave will be made available on the terms set out in the NHS Scotland Special Leave Policy.

[View the NHS Scotland Special Leave Policy.](#)

Employees should not be disadvantaged if they cannot attend work for reasons beyond their control. Special leave can be granted during an adverse weather event or afterwards if there is still a major disruption to travel and infrastructure.

## **Related policies**

The following policy is related to the Adverse Weather Policy:

- [NHS Scotland Special Leave Policy](#)