



**Workforce**

**Adverse Weather Policy: guide for managers**

This guide will help managers to understand how to apply the Adverse Weather Policy appropriately.

The following guide forms part of the standard for workforce policies. These policies apply to all eligible staff within NHS Scotland, regardless of the board they are employed by. The guide covers:

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# What is the purpose of the Adverse Weather Policy?

This policy explains what managers and employees should do when severe weather affects an employee's safety or their ability to get to work.

## Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to:

- all employees
- bank, agency, and sessional workers
- secondees, volunteers, and contractors
- anyone on placement, such as students, trainees, or those on work experience

## Definition

Adverse weather is defined by the Met Office Weather Warning system.

This policy applies when severe weather:

- stops an employee from getting to their normal workplace
- poses a significant risk to an employee's health, safety, and wellbeing.

Adverse weather also includes extreme summer temperatures.

## Manager responsibilities

As a manager, you should:

- Consider the health, safety, and wellbeing of your employees.
- Carry out risk assessments before expected bad weather, where needed.
- Base your decisions on safety and reasonableness, using a person-centred approach.
- Keep in regular contact with your employees.
- Understand your employees' personal circumstances and travel plans.
- Find safe and suitable alternative work locations if employees cannot get to their normal workplace.

- Encourage flexible working practices for employees who can, to work from home.
- Make employees aware of the plans for maintaining essential services.

## **Planning for adverse weather**

Checking local travel and transport updates can help you understand the likely impact of bad weather. Understanding the weather warning colours can also help you prepare.

### **Red weather warning**

Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather.

Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life are likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

### **Amber weather warning**

There is an increased likelihood of bad weather affecting you. This could disrupt your plans and cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruptions to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means you need to be prepared to change your plans and protect you, your family and your community from the severe weather impacts based on the Met Office's forecast.

### **Yellow weather warning**

Severe weather is possible over the next few days and could affect you. Yellow means that you should plan ahead, thinking about possible travel delays or disruptions to your day-to-day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation, and Yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans in the next few days.

You can find the latest updates on the [Met Office website](#).

## **Making a plan with your employees**

As a manager, you should take early action to mitigate the anticipated impact. To plan for any eventuality, you should be aware of your employees' circumstances and travel arrangements.

As part of your planning, you can consider the following options to support employees:

- swapping shifts
- working from home
- working at another site
- working shorter hours.

You should also establish arrangements for employees to confirm they have arrived safely after travelling to and from work locations.

## **Provision for special leave**

If no other option is possible, you can offer an employee paid special leave if severe weather stops them from getting to work. This is managed according to the [NHS Scotland Special Leave Policy](#).

Make sure employees are not disadvantaged if they cannot get to work for reasons beyond their control. If there is still significant disruption to travel and infrastructure after a weather warning has ended, you can offer special leave.

## **Provision of essential services**

Use a person-centred approach and consider each employee's individual circumstances. Employees should not take unnecessary risks to get to work and should follow official travel advice.

If you decide to close or change a service provision, you should act as early as possible and notify all affected employees.

Employees may be deployed to other areas to help maintain essential services. If you cannot deploy an employee or they cannot work from another location, including their home, they will receive full payment for the shift.

You must discuss and manage the risks with any employee who drives as part of their work. If they continue to drive, you should stay in regular contact and get updates on their safety and location.

## **Provisions for working on other sites**

It is important that you familiarise yourself with your board's contingency plan for adverse weather. These plans explain how employees can be deployed to other workplaces within your board.

When deploying an employee to another location, their health, safety, and wellbeing must be the priority. You must also maintain all security and risk management arrangements.

If an employee tells you they cannot get to their usual workplace, you may ask them to attend a nearby NHS facility. This requires the agreement of the alternative facility.

## **Provisions for working across board boundaries**

You should check your board's contingency plan for any existing arrangements for deploying employees across board boundaries. If so, the above recommendations should also apply.

## **Arrangements for working at home**

As a manager, you should consider if home working is appropriate for an employee. This depends on their role, whether they have the right equipment to work safely, and whether they are needed for essential services elsewhere.

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

You must make sure arrangements are in place for any employee who stays at their workplace. This could be because they are stranded due to travel disruption or have agreed to stay to provide cover.

These arrangements must include:

- **Accommodation** – Provided free of charge. The type and availability may vary, but the priority is the employee's health and safety.
- **Refreshments** – Regular meals and drinks must be made available.

No instruction should be given to employees to continue working outside of normal working hours if they are unable to return home.

If an employee agrees to work extra hours to provide cover, they must be given:

- meals

- drinks
- appropriate pay or time off in lieu

You must also make sure they get adequate rest breaks, as required by the Working Time Regulations. Employees are entitled to at least 11 consecutive hours of rest in any 24-hour period.

## **Provision for shorter working hours**

As a manager, you can consider earlier finishing times or changing shift patterns to help employees travel home safely. You should also consider all reasonable requests to leave early, especially from those with long journeys.

If many people are leaving at once, stagger their departure times to minimise disruption. Employees who leave early in these circumstances will be paid for their whole shift.

Employees who arrive late due to travel difficulties will also be paid for their full shift. If official advice recommends avoiding peak travel, you should adopt a flexible approach to working patterns.

Where it is safe to do so, you should encourage employees to come to work. Even if it is only for part of their shift, it will help to maintain essential services.

## **Useful links**

- [About WeatherReady](#)