

Policy on Weather and Transport Problems

Introduction

This policy summarises the organisation's response to disruption caused by extreme weather and, transport problems. It is in two sections. The first deals with health and safety, the second with attendance. It explains how the organisation will handle absence due to poor weather or transport problems. It also outlines the responsibilities on employees' for attendance at work during severe weather conditions or when there are problems on public transport, or on the roads as a result of severe weather.

This policy has been developed as far as possible to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and consistently. It applies to all employees.

Status of this policy

This policy is not contractual and we reserve the right to alter it at any time, although we will notify you in writing of any changes.

General principles

This policy aims to protect the health and safety of all employees, whilst ensuring that disruption caused to our organisation remains minimal. In practice this means that all employees are expected to use every effort to report for work at their normal workplace at their usual start time, which could entail having to make special arrangements to ensure that they can attend each day. However, it is not the organisation's intention that employees put themselves at unnecessary risk when trying to attend work.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Sensible precautions

If severe weather is expected, you should:

- think carefully before attending external meetings. Is it possible to hold a telephone conference instead? Check with your manager if you are unsure.
- If you do travel on business make sure that someone knows where you are going, the route you plan to take and, when you expect to be back. If the situation changes, keep your manager informed.
- Always make sure that you leave with a fully charged mobile phone.

- If you need to drive in severe weather conditions then we advise you to follow the advice given by the AA, some of which is replicated below. Further advice regarding the maintenance of your car can be found on their website.

Preparing to travel

- Get up at least **10 minutes early** to give you time to prepare the car.
- Don't drive off like a tank-commander, with a tiny hole cleared in your windscreen. **Clear all windows** of snow and ice using a scraper and de-icer.
- Use a cigarette lighter to warm a key for a **frozen lock**. Don't breathe on the lock, as the moisture will condense and freeze.
- Besides an ice scraper and de-icer, it's worth carrying a **mobile phone with fully charged battery**, torch, first-aid kit, tow rope, blankets, warm coat and boots, jump leads, snow shovel, warning triangle, an old sack or rug (to put under the wheels if you do get stuck) and water repellent spray.
- **Plan routes** to favour major roads which are more likely to have been gritted.
- Put **safety before punctuality** when the bad weather closes in. While it's always a good idea to allow extra time in winter for your journey, drivers must accept the inevitability of being late for work if they are caught up in an unexpected delay.

Driving in snow and ice

- Stopping distances are 10 times longer in ice and snow.
- Gentle manoeuvres are the key to safe driving.
- Wear comfortable, dry shoes: cumbersome, snow-covered boots will slip on the pedals.
- Select second gear when pulling away, easing your foot off the clutch gently to avoid wheel-spin.
- When **climbing a hill** it's important to avoid having to stop on the hill by waiting until it is clear of other cars or by leaving plenty of room between you and the car in front. Try to maintain a **constant speed**, choosing the most suitable gear well in advance to avoid having to change down on the hill.
- When driving **downhill**, reduce your speed before the hill, use a low gear and try to avoid using the brakes. Leave as much room as possible between you and the car in front.
- Always **apply brakes gently**. Release them and de-clutch if the car skids.
- If you have an automatic, then under normal driving conditions (motorways, etc) it's best to select 'Drive' and let the gearbox do the work throughout the full gear range. In slippery, snowy conditions you can make driving much safer by selecting '2', which limits the gear changes and also makes you less reliant on the brakes. Many modern autos have a 'Winter' mode which locks out first gear to reduce the risk of wheel spin. Check the handbook if you're not sure.
- If you do get stuck, straighten the steering and clear the snow from the wheels. Put a sack or old rug in front of the driving wheels to give the tyres some grip. Once on the move again, try not to stop until you reach firmer ground.

ATTENDANCE AT WORK

Procedure if you are unable to reach your normal place of work

If you expect to be late or cannot safely reach work due to adverse weather or experience related problems on public transport, you must telephone your manager as soon as possible. If you are unable to reach your manager directly, you must report your absence to _____ by TIME. Unless your manager tells you otherwise, you should telephone to notify them on each and every day that you are unable to get to work. Failure to notify that you are unable to attend work without a reasonable explanation will count as unauthorised absence.

If you are unable to attend your normal workplace due to adverse weather conditions, your manager may ask you to [work from home] [comply with temporary redeployment to an alternative workplace]. If this is not possible, you will be required either:

- to take holiday
- to take unpaid leave; or
- at your manager's discretion, to make the time up within a reasonable and agreed time scale.

Deterioration of weather whilst at work

If you wish to leave work early because the weather is becoming worse and you wish to get home before it possibly becomes too bad to travel, you must discuss this with your manager. Managers will decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate for employees in their department to leave work early. When making this decision, they will take into account the employee's circumstances (e.g. distance from his/her home to work, mode of transport), the employee's views and the needs of the organisation.

If your manager agrees that you can leave early, you must also agree with your manager whether you should take the time as annual or unpaid leave or whether you can make the time up within a reasonable and agreed time scale.

If we decide to close your normal workplace when you are ready, willing and available for work, you will be paid for your normal working hours.

School/nursery closure impacting on your ability to work

If your child's school or nursery has closed due to bad weather and this impacts on your ability to come to work, please use our Time off for Dependant's Policy.

Possible disciplinary action

Where it is suspected that an individual is using adverse weather conditions as an excuse not to attend work or there is unauthorised absence on your part, we may take action under our disciplinary procedure.