

Human Resources Directorate

Adverse Weather Policy

The policy is designed to deliver clear policy and procedures of the Company to its employees, whenever adverse weather events or similar circumstances occur.

Effective Date of this Policy is: 19th April 2021

Policy Review Date is: April 2022 {subject to changes in legislation}

Queries to: Employee Relations (Policy); S&E Section (PPE; Safety Task Procedures)

Replaces/Supersedes: Circular 48-2011

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The safety of An Post staff and members of the public is paramount. An Post is committed, in so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensuring the safety, health and welfare of its employees and all those affected by its activities.
- 1.2. Extreme and severe weather events can impact on the Company's ability to maintain services to customers and operate business in a normal manner. Such events can also have an impact on employees and their ability to attend at work as scheduled.
- 1.3. The Company understands that in times of adverse weather or similar circumstances, employees may be left in a position where they are unable to attend for work or have to attend earlier/later than scheduled due to access or transport difficulties.
- 1.4. The purpose of this document is to provide a clear statement of the Company's policy and outline procedures by which decisions on the maintenance of operations, with consequences for employee attendance and travel during adverse weather conditions, will be made.

2. Statement and scope of Policy

- 2.1 As an essential service provider it is the Company's policy to remain open, where possible, for business during times of adverse weather conditions or similar circumstances. Where services continue to operate employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend for work. However, employees are not expected to, and should not, put themselves at undue risk when trying to attend for work.
- 2.2 This policy relates to circumstances where, an employee is scheduled to attend work but is unable to do so due to access or transport difficulties outside of their control where they have been left with no feasible mode of transport to attend for work. The employee must be in a position to demonstrate that they exhausted all reasonable transport options, including all public transport options.
- 2.3 There may be circumstances related or unrelated to adverse weather conditions where an employee is unable to attend work due to a need to provide emergency care for a family member due to illness or other family situation. Such situations are not within the scope of this policy and employees should refer to the Company's Special Leave policies.
- 2.4 This policy and procedure complements existing Company Safety, Health & Environment Policies and procedures as well as the Company's Business Continuity Plan.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Adverse Weather:

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Adverse weather is defined as extreme and severe weather events such as heavy snow or ice accumulations, flooding, strong winds up to and including hurricane force that can occur at a national or local level, impacting on the Company's ability to maintain services and operate under normal conditions and on the ability of employees to attend at work.

3.2 Weather Warnings & Notice of:

The Company will have regard to advice from the National Emergency Co-ordination Group when it is convened, and from Met Éireann who is responsible for issuing weather forecasts and warnings for Ireland. Most adverse weather warnings are issued in advance and are updated as new information becomes available. In general, warnings will not be issued more than 48-hours ahead of the expected adverse weather conditions but advisories on potential hazards can be issued up to a week in advance. This allows adequate time for the Company to determine an appropriate response and for all employees to take appropriate steps to ensure they can attend for work if required to do so.

3.3 Status Red Weather Warning:

A Status Red Weather Warning is issued due to rare and very dangerous weather conditions from intense meteorological phenomena which **will** pose a threat to life and property. Such warnings tend to be issued due to heavy snow or ice accumulations, flooding, extremely strong wind conditions including hurricane force winds that will result in damage affecting the normal operations of the Company and representing a significant risk to the safety of employees. In response to a Status Red Weather warning the Company will decide to either partially or entirely suspend normal operations for the duration of the weather warning. Such a decision may relate to geographical areas or the whole country depending on the nature and extent of the warning.

3.4 Status Orange Weather Warning:

A Status Orange Weather Warning is issued due to infrequent and dangerous weather conditions which **may** pose a threat to life and property. Employees and Company property in the affected areas can be significantly impacted. In such circumstances, unless the conditions dictate otherwise Company operations are likely to be continued but may have to be delayed, curtailed or adapted as appropriate based on prevailing conditions and risk factors. Employees, where required to do so, are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend for work. Employees are encouraged to be prepared in an appropriate way depending on location and activity as there is an increased likelihood of severe or extremely bad weather.

3.5 Status Yellow Weather Warning / Hazardous Conditions:

A Status Yellow warning is issued when weather that does NOT pose a threat to the general population but is potentially dangerous on a localised scale. These weather or emergency conditions may cause local schools and some local transport services to close but the majority of businesses/services remain open. Normal Company operations will continue but may have to be adapted as appropriate based on prevailing conditions and risk factors. Employees are expected to attend for work. Employees working in an area subject to a Status Yellow warning are encouraged to be aware of conditions and take note that severely bad weather is possible over the coming days.

3.6 Sudden Weather Changes:

From time to time depending on emerging conditions weather warnings can be upgraded with short notice, going from Status Yellow to Status Orange or Status Red. In such circumstances the Company will respond in a timely manner to the changed warnings,

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having regard to any advice issued by Met Eireann, and following consultations with local management where necessary, will take appropriate, coordinated action in response at local and/or national level.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 The Company will maintain an awareness on an ongoing basis of Met Eireann forecasts and warnings and / or Government Agency advice relating to weather events. Where in response to warnings / advice it is decided to alter normal service levels / operations it will advise all affected staff through appropriate communication channels (e.g. verbal updates from line managers, email, text, phone or it's Post People App) as to its plans specifying what action and procedures must be adhered to prior to, and during, an adverse weather event.
- 4.2 Should a decision be made at any stage to suspend normal operations at a local or national level employees scheduled to attend work in locations affected will be recorded as if they had given their scheduled attendance for the period of suspension. This applies regardless of whether, or not, an employee attends for part of the day before any decision to suspend operations is communicated.
- 4.3 4.2 does not apply, however, where an employee previously:
- (i) had an absence approved for the period to which any suspension of operations applies;
 - (ii) gave notice of an unscheduled absence due to illness for the period concerned.
- 4.4 Where normal operations are continued during a weather warning employees are expected to attend work as scheduled. Where however, because of localised conditions affecting them, an employee is unable to attend work as scheduled due to circumstances outside of their control, their line manager should be advised as soon as possible. The employee may then choose from one of the following options:
- (i) **Work from home or at an alternative Company location**
Administrative employees who are in a position to work from home or from an alternative Company location, may be requested to do so. Authorisation will be granted at the Company's discretion. During such time the employee will be expected to carry out their work in the normal manner and be available to answer work-related calls and emails. If it is foreseen that the employee may not be in a position to attend for work due to weather conditions or similar circumstances, the employee will be expected to make the necessary arrangements in advance which will facilitate them working from home or at an alternative Company location.
 - (ii) **Flexi leave**
Employees who are on Flexitime may use any time which has already been worked up to offset against absence due to the weather conditions.
 - (iii) **Use of Annual Leave carried over from previous years**
Where an employee has carried over leave from previous years, this should be used in the first instance to address any additional time off requirement caused by the weather conditions.
 - (iv) **Annual Leave**
Employees who do not have sufficient flexi credit worked up or leave carried over may opt to have their annual leave allocation reduced by the number of days they were absent.

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(v) Advance of Annual Leave

Employees, for whom the current annual leave year is due to end, will be allowed apply for an advance of leave from the next leave year if the taking of annual leave would create difficulties in the current leave year (e.g. because an employee has no leave entitlement remaining or has already booked holidays for their remaining entitlement). However, an advance of leave can only be allowed where this does not leave the employee with less than their statutory leave entitlement in the new leave year.

(vi) Unpaid Leave

If the employee does not wish to use part of their annual leave allocation, special leave without pay will be allowed. However, in order to avoid undue financial hardship for individuals, the pay will, on request, be deducted on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis (whichever is appropriate) over an agreed period.

4.5 Childcare provision when schools are closed

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that they have emergency care arrangements in place for their children in case of a school closure due to adverse weather. In the event of a sudden or unforeseen weather event, and this is not possible, the employee should discuss the matter with their line manager where, at the discretion of the Company, they may request to take one of the options at 4.4 above.

5. Roster / Attendance changes

- 5.1 Depending on the severity or duration of an adverse weather event it may be necessary to change rosters / attendance times at short notice to ensure business continuity. While normally employees are entitled to notice of at least 24 hours of a roster change, this does not apply in exceptional circumstances such as extreme weather events where the full impact of event might not always be foreseeable. However, the Company will make every reasonable effort to notify an employee of a roster change owing to an extreme weather event at the earliest opportunity.

6. Extended period of closure or total destruction of a Company property

- 6.1 If, following an adverse weather event, a Company property is totally destroyed or is closed for an extended period of time, the Company will initiate its Business Continuity Plans which may include relocation to an alternative location to conduct its operations.
- 6.2 In these circumstances employees may be temporarily redeployed to an alternative work location or to a temporary location until such time as remedial works permit the reopening of the effected property.
- 6.3 Where these options are not feasible, and all other options have been exhausted, the Company reserve the right to put employees on a period of 'layoff' when there is no work available for a temporary period. If employees are laid-off they may be entitled to Jobseekers Benefit or Jobseekers Allowance from the Department of Social Protection for the days they are not working.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Employees

- 7.1.1 While the Company will take all reasonable steps to ensure its duty of care to its employees, each staff member is ultimately responsible for their own safety and must take care to ensure they do not cause any damage or injury by their actions or conduct that would put them or others at risk.
- 7.1.2 In line with 2.1 above, it is the responsibility of every employee to make every effort to attend for work as scheduled.
- 7.1.3 In line with existing reporting arrangements, employees who cannot attend for work as scheduled or may be late due to adverse weather are responsible for contacting their manager as soon as possible and keeping them advised of any changes in circumstances.
- 7.1.4 Employees who live in remote areas are aware of the potential difficulties they may face during periods of adverse weather and should be prepared to make appropriate arrangements in relation to attendance at work.
- 7.1.5 Employees must wear the Personal Protective Equipment, relevant to their roles, that is provided.
- 7.1.6 During an adverse weather event an employee may not be able to safely perform their normal duty and may be asked to cover other work.
- 7.1.7 All employees must engage fully with reasonable instructions provided by management and should not decide to take any action including, refusing to attend work, refusing to perform their duties while at work, leave without permission or refuse to follow an instruction that serves to secure their safety, the safety of their fellow employees or the protection of Company property.

7.2 Line Managers

- 7.2.1 Line managers are responsible for maintaining proper safety standards in Company work locations under their remit.
- 7.2.2 When considering requests from employees, Line managers are expected to ensure that employees are treated in an equitable and consistent manner and that the safety of employees is not compromised in any way.
- 7.2.3 In the event that a localised extreme weather event may compromise the safety of staff Line Managers should consult with their respective Area / Operations Manager, in order for a decision to be made on the appropriate course of action to be taken. The action to be taken will depend on the level of risk.

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7.2.4 Where appropriate, and practical, Line Managers should hold a staff briefing to include all or some of the following (depending on the role of their employees):

- Drawing attention to this policy and procedure;
- Reminding employees that they are responsible for their own safety in all cases;
- Drawing attention to tips for driving in specific conditions;
- Drawing attention to role relevant safety task procedures;
- Ensuring the wearing of PPE (mandatory);
- Checking of Company vehicles, lighting, drying facilities etc.;
- Communicating the arrangements for reliance on grit/salt/shovels;
- Drawing attention to the telephone number of local Gardaí/Doctor;
- Delaying or suspending business activities.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Ongoing monitoring of the policy will include:

- Ensuring that the policy is communicated to all employees.
- Regularly reviewing policies and processes in the light of changes in employment and safety legislation and best practice in this area.
- Ensuring that breaches of the policy will be investigated internally through the normal disciplinary or grievance mechanisms and that complaints will be treated on a prompt and confidential basis.
- Reviewing the procedure on a regular basis to evaluate its effectiveness.

9. Further Information

9.1 Further information can be found both internally and externally:

9.1.1 Internal - An Post Safety Task Procedures:

- **STP02-33** – Use of Atlas SP10(P)Salt Spreader
- **STP06-15** – Deliveries in Severe Weather Issue
- **STP06-16** – Use of Traction Aids
- **STP07-15** – Use of 'Extra Foot' Ice and Snow Windows Scraper

9.1.2 External Resources

- www.winterready.ie
- www.met.ie (weather)
- www.iws.ie (water safety)
- www.hse.ie (health)
- www.rsa.ie (road safety)
- www.tii.ie (traffic information)
- www.flooding.ie (OPW)
- www.emergencyplanning.ie