

**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Adverse & Extreme Weather Guidance**

**June 2024**

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**Adverse & Extreme Weather:**

**Guidance for Managers and Staff**

1. **Introduction**
   1. **Adverse and extreme weather events are relatively infrequent. The Council acknowledges a duty of care to employees during such events.**
   2. **The Council will always endeavour to take the appropriate measures to keep employees and members of the public safe under such circumstances.**
   3. **This Guidance is designed to assist managers and employees when faced with adverse or extreme weather.**
   4. **This Guidance should be considered by managers when there is a Amber Weather warning and applied in the event of a Red Weather warning.**
2. **Critical services and essential roles**
   1. **For the purposes of providing services that are deemed critical during adverse weather it may become necessary to designate some employees as being in “essential roles”. Such post holders should know that this may be the case as part of their working arrangements.**
   2. **Whilst no employee should be subjected to an unacceptable degree of risk to their Health and Safety to travel to and from work, or carrying out their duties whilst at work, such employees are expected to make an enhanced effort to attend work. This may require additional support from the Council and its key partners, including the emergency services, to help them travel to and from work and/or to carry out their duties whilst at work.**
   3. **Such employees should be made aware when they have been designated as being in an essential role and advised when this arrangement no longer applies. Service Business Continuity Plans should be referred to in assessing critical services and essential roles.**
3. **Responsibilities**
   1. **Manager** **responsibilities** 
      1. It is the responsibility of Managers to ensure employees know and understand the procedure related to attendance at work during adverse weather conditions.
      2. It is also the responsibility of managers to ensure the appropriate Health and Safety measures are in place.
      3. Managers should discuss, on an individual basis, employee travel arrangements and any individual considerations associated. Where employees have the ability to work from home, or from other locations/bases, this should be communicated and agreed.
      4. Managers should make sure the service has appropriate business continuity plans and equipment in place.
   2. **Employee responsibilities** 
      1. It is the employee’s responsibility to make every endeavour to travel and attend their place of work. The Council accepts however, that there are circumstances that arise which make it difficult for an employee to comply with that condition of their employment, one of which is adverse weather conditions.
      2. It is the responsibility of employees to comply with the procedures to be followed in the event of adverse weather conditions. Furthermore, employees should ensure no unreasonable risks are attempted in getting to work and if in doubt should consult their manager for advice and guidance.
      3. Employees should register for weather alerts and prepare for adverse weather. This would include ensuring that laptops/equipment is taken home to allow working from home should weather conditions prevail.
4. **Health and safety arrangements**
   1. Managers and senior members of staff at each workplace location must ensure that **there** is a safe place of work for employees, contractors on site, and for members of the public, where applicable.
   2. Nominated senior officers must ensure that in each workplace location, a safe working environment is maintained and that alternative and interim fire safety and building evacuation procedures are in place, should that be necessary.
5. **Types of weather warning**
   1. **The definitions of an amber and red weather warning according to the Met Office are as follows:** 
      1. **Amber Warning:** There is an increased likelihood of impacts from severe weather, which could potentially disrupt your plans. This means there is the possibility of travel delays, road and rail closures, power cuts and the potential risk to life and property. You should think about changing your plans and taking action to protect yourself and your property. You may want to consider the impact of the weather on your family and your community and whether there is anything you need to do ahead of the severe weather to minimise the impact.
      2. **Red Warning:** Dangerous weather is expected and, if you haven’t already done so, you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the severe weather. It is very likely that there will be a risk to life, with substantial disruption to travel, energy supplies and possibly widespread damage to property and infrastructure. You should avoid travelling, where possible, and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.
6. **Pre-adverse weather event staff consultation** 
   1. When it is forecast that adverse weather may affect an employee’s ability to attend or continue in work, services should:
      1. Consult with employees on the extent of their commute and any specific considerations.
      2. Consider individual circumstances, put in place alternative working and IT solutions where appropriate and hold an awareness of staff commuting arrangements.
      3. Ensure that employees with the ability to work from home[[1]](#footnote-1) take the appropriate resources home with them (e.g. documents, laptop) and are aware of GDPR and data protection requirements when doing so.
      4. Encourage employees to register for the Met Office weather alerts.
      5. Ensure that information gathered is reflected in Business Continuity Plans, where appropriate.
7. **Amber or red warning (heat): manager preventative actions and mitigation**
   1. When **either** an amber or red heat warning is made by the Met Office all managers will be reminded to consider the following for employees under their responsibility (building mitigations being reliant on existing building design):
      1. Ensure workplace windows can be opened or closed to prevent hot air from circulating or building up.
      2. Using blinds or reflective film on workplace windows to shade workers from the sun.
      3. Placing workstations away from direct sunlight and heat sources.
      4. Offering flexible working patterns so workers can work at cooler times of the day. During extreme heat this may mean working earlier or on split shifts if agreeable to employees through consultation.
      5. Relaxing dress codes if possible.
      6. Providing weather-appropriate [personal protective equipment](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/managing.htm#ppe)
      7. Encouraging workers to remove [personal protective equipment](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/managing.htm#ppe) when resting (ideally in shaded areas) to cool off.
      8. Sharing information about the symptoms of heat stress and what to do if someone is affected.
      9. Being flexible in workplace location if possible. It may be better for employees to work from home or from an air-conditioned workplace, depending upon their personal circumstances and commuting arrangements.
      10. Managers should ensure that extreme weather is identified as a hazard in their Service/Team general Risk assessment, with attention paid to those groups of employees who are more vulnerable to extreme weather conditions.
      11. For vulnerable employees (including pregnant employees and anyone with a known heart condition), managers should have discussions and make appropriate plans to ensure they are not put at any additional risk to their health. Managers should consider special measures for these individual employees during amber and red heat warnings.
      12. Provide adequate welfare facilities and free access to cool fresh drinking water.
      13. Workers whose exposure to heat cannot be reduced should be provided with adequate breaks and facilities to cool them down, including personal cooling equipment or cooling air flows.
   2. Managers will also undertake risk assessments for any public activities taking place during extreme heat and take the appropriate measures to ensure the public is protected.
8. **Amber or red warning (Extreme Winter Weather): manager preventative actions and mitigation**
   1. Extreme winter weather such as snow, ice and flooding can severely disrupt travelling. Therefore, managers should consider the following for their employees.
      1. Being flexible on work location if possible and consider whether it is possible for the individual to work from home.
      2. Be mindful of difficult commuting conditions and allow staff flexibility for those that struggle with their journey into work due to wintery weather and/or flooding.
      3. Consider allowing staff to leave early if the extreme winter weather event takes place during the working day.
      4. Providing weather-appropriate [personal protective equipment](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/managing.htm#ppe)
      5. Provide appropriate welfare facilities, maintained at an appropriate temperature and allow enough breaks to enable workers to get hot drinks or warm up in heated areas.
      6. Ensure indoor workspaces comply with minimum working temperatures in line with Health & Safety legislation.
   2. Managers will also undertake risk assessments for any public activities taking place during extreme winter weather and take the appropriate measures to ensure the public is protected.
9. **Employees** **responsibilities:**
   1. Here are some things employees can do to make your workplace temperature more comfortable:

### **Working inside during extreme temperatures**

* + 1. Add or remove layers of clothing, depending on how hot or cold you are.
    2. Use a desk or pedestal fan to increase air movement.
    3. Use window blinds to reduce the heating effects of the sun.
    4. If you are too warm drink plenty of water (avoid caffeinated or carbonated drinks)
    5. If possible, work away from direct sunlight or sources of heat, such as machinery.
    6. Take regular breaks to cool down in hot conditions or heat up in cold ones.

### **Working outside in hot temperatures:**

* + 1. Keep your top on.
    2. Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and the back of the neck.
    3. Stay in the shade whenever possible, during your breaks and especially at lunch time.
    4. Use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF15 on any exposed skin.
    5. Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
    6. Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding.
  1. If you have any issue with the temperature, you should report this to your manager, or your union or workplace representative if you have one.

1. **Adverse weather occurring during working hours** 
   1. Where adverse weather conditions arise during the working day, guidance about attending work will be issued via the Corporate Communications team as soon as possible.
2. **Employees who cannot attend their normal or alternative place of work** 
   1. If informed that an employee cannot attend any place of work, then the manager may, after discussion, and if appropriate, authorise the employee to work from home[[2]](#footnote-2).
   2. Ahead of any prevailing adverse conditions services should set critical staff up with IT equipment and advise of expectations to take the equipment home.
3. **Employees who participate in the flexible working scheme** 
   1. Where employees participate in the Flexible Working Scheme, the flexibility allowed within the scheme should be sufficient to accommodate any disruption to public transport timetables, i.e. start and stop times of between 7.30 am and 7.00pm from Monday to Friday.
   2. Employees will be expected to make up anytime lost attending work due to adverse weather conditions.
4. **Employee who do not participate in the flexible working scheme** 
   1. Employees who do not participate in flexi-time arrangements may, at the discretion of managers, make up lost time by starting earlier, taking shorter lunch breaks[[3]](#footnote-3) and/or finishing later over several days after their non-attendance.
   2. Where necessary shift rotas and/or working time may be altered in consultation with the individuals so concerned.
5. **Employees affected by withdrawal or reduction of public transport facilities** 
   1. A manager or employee may be able to arrange transport to work for employees affected by the withdrawal or reduction of public transport facilities.
   2. Council vehicles may be legitimately utilised for this purpose during adverse weather conditions or, if safe to do so, employees with their own cars may assist those without into their place of work.
6. **Alternative operational arrangements** 
   1. Every reasonable effort will be made to open all Council Offices and other establishments. Each Service will co-ordinate its own operational services including decisions on establishment closures, after consultation with appropriate Head of Service, Service Director or Executive Director, should that become necessary.
   2. Where employees are directed to premises, other than their normal place of work, because of adverse or extreme weather conditions, then, any additional travel expenditure should be reimbursed (subject to provision of receipts and in accordance with Council policy for the payment of expenses)
7. **Monitoring of guidance**
   1. This guidance will be reviewed periodically.
8. **Further information:**
   1. Additional information is available online through the following sources –

[Temperature: What the law says (hse.gov.uk)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/the-law.htm)

[Heatwave: how to cope in hot weather - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/Live-well/seasonal-health/heatwave-how-to-cope-in-hot-weather/)

1. Please ensure that the information in the [Home & Hybrid Working SMP](https://intranet.sandwell.gov.uk/info/20193/procedures/1220/safety_management_procedures_smp) is discussed and made known to such employees [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Refer to Home & Hybrid Working SMP. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A worker is entitled to a minimum uninterrupted break of 20 minutes when daily working time is more than six hours. It should be a break in working time and should not be taken either at the start, or at the end, of a working day... [↑](#footnote-ref-3)