



Health and Safety - Adverse Weather

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**Shaw
Education
Trust**

1. Overview

Adverse weather includes heat waves and winter weather e.g. snow, ice, high winds, freezing fog and extreme cold. During periods of adverse weather Premises Managers and Line Managers should ensure that procedures are in place to minimise risks.

The Metrological Office has a warning system that issues alerts if adverse weather is likely, it also issues Cold Weather and Heat Wave Alerts.

There is no legal minimum or maximum temperature for workplaces and for most employees during periods of hot weather workplace, discomfort is of nuisance value and will not result in any adverse health effects.

2. Requirement

2.1. Risk assessment for staff working in premises

Managers must consider whether a risk assessment is necessary for adverse weather. Where a risk assessment is considered necessary it should consider the working arrangements which should be put in place to minimise any risks identified. Risks may be present for staff, service users and in some cases members of the public.

Heat waves and hot weather

During a heat wave managers in most indoor environments are unlikely to identify significant risks and a formal risk assessment may not be necessary. However, managers must consider measures which may alleviate significant discomfort which may result from the heat. For example, where possible workstations could be relocated away from direct sunlight and employees should be encouraged to consume plenty of cool drinks. The use of electrical fans, air conditioning and air handling systems should be in accordance with local premises arrangements. Non-essential electrical equipment should be turned off as it may produce additional heat.

Winter Weather

Risk assessments for premises during winter weather should include identification of the hazards and the areas used by pedestrians or vehicles coming to the building that are most likely to be affected by ice or snow, for example: building entrances, car parks, pedestrian walkways, playgrounds, shortcuts, sloped areas and areas constantly in the shade or wet. Where premises or grounds contain accessible bodies of water that may become frozen, the management of this must form part of a risk assessment.

A risk assessment would also identify those staff who have tasks to carry out should winter weather be forecast or occur and refer to written procedures that

are in place to prevent icy surfaces forming, keep pedestrians away from slippery surfaces and treat ice.

2.2 Risk assessment for staff working outdoors

Managers of staff who work outside during adverse weather should undertake a risk assessment of the hazards and have a plan in place to ensure that the risks are reduced as far as reasonably practicable.

Heat waves and hot weather

Hazards during hot weather may include sunburn, dehydration or sunstroke. Control measures may include wearing suitable clothes (long sleeves/trousers with close weave, wide brim hats to protect neck), use of sun creams with high sun protection factors, provision of additional fluids and taking breaks in a cooler area. Consideration should be given to modifying work routines so that high sun exposure, or heavy physical work, is undertaken outside of the intense sunlight hours of the day.

Winter weather

In winter weather hazards may include slips, trips and falls, reduced visibility and increased difficulty associated with operation of vehicles in winter weather conditions.

Control measures during cold weather may include journey planning before travel, the provision of facilities for taking breaks in a warm environment e.g. a vehicle. Managers may develop plans to reduce the requirement for travel.

Risk assessments may identify a need to provide suitable control measures which may include Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as Hi Visibility items, winter weather clothing and suitable footwear. Managers must ensure that any equipment required as part of risk control measures is available and used.

Managers must also consider the type of work undertaken during winter weather, and the suitability of conditions for certain activities and use of some equipment.

2.3 Advice for Managers responsible for provision of care for service users

Some groups, including the elderly and very young are more susceptible to the effects of adverse weather including hypothermia and heatstroke. Managers responsible for the provision of care to these groups must ensure that they have considered the implications of adverse weather to their service users and planned to control the hazards within their service. Plans that are made for use during adverse weather must be communicated to staff and other groups including partner organisations, carers and partners where appropriate.

The groups most at risk during heat waves and in the cold include:

- Older people, especially those over 75 years old and living on their own, or in a care home;
- Babies and young children:

- People suffering from mental ill health, those with dementia, and those who rely on help from other people to manage day-to-day activities;
- People who are bed-bound or have mobility problems;
- People taking certain types of medication;
- People with a serious chronic condition, particularly breathing or heart problems;
- People who use alcohol or illicit drugs;
- During heat waves - people who already have a high temperature from an infection

Advice on how to control the risks that arise from hot weather and heat waves is available from the Health Protection Agency

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england> and includes the following:

“Advice for health and social care professionals: supporting vulnerable people before and during a heatwave” and,

“Advice for care home managers and staff: supporting vulnerable people before and during a heatwave” available

Schools and services providing care to young people

Headteachers and Managers should consider whether it is appropriate to complete a risk assessment for hot weather and heat waves and have a plan in place to ensure that the risks are reduced as far as reasonably practicable.

Advice on how to control the risks that arise from hot weather and heat waves is available in “Looking after Schoolchildren and those in Early Years Settings during Heat Waves:” is available from the Health Protection Agency <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england>

Controls include provision of shade, encouraging children to drink water and avoiding seating children in direct sunlight.

Managers and teachers should be aware that the skin of the young is particularly sensitive to the effects of sun and excessive exposure to sun light and sun burn in childhood will increase the likelihood of skin cancer in later life. Reasonable precautions should be taken to ensure that exposure to the sun is not excessive and sunburn is avoided.

Examples of precautions that could be implemented to limit exposure to the sun include the wearing of wide brimmed hats, the provision and use of shade during the planning of outdoor events and encouraging and encouraging the application of sun cream.

Further information about sun safety in schools and nurseries is available from <http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/schools/>

2.4 Government Advice on heatwaves

The Heatwave Plan for England aims to prepare for, alert people to, and prevent, the major avoidable effects on health during periods of severe heat in England. It recommends a series of steps to reduce the risks to health from prolonged exposure to severe heat. This information is available from Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england> and includes the following documents in addition to those referred to above:

1. Heatwave Plan for England
2. Making the case: the impact of heat on health – now and in the future
3. Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather (leaflet)
4. Beat the heat (poster)
5. Beat the heat: keep cool at home

2.5 Government advice on extreme cold

Cold weather plan (CWP) for England is available from Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cold-weather-plan-for-england>

It includes the following documents:

1. Cold weather plan (CWP) for England
2. Cold weather plan: action cards for cold weather alert service
3. 'Keep Warm Keep Well' leaflet

2.6 Flexible and Agile Working

Managers should consider the ability of their service to accommodate the use of flexible and agile working arrangements.

2.7 Business Continuity Planning

All schools will have in place a Business Continuity Plan. This should ensure that as far as practicable, work and services can continue during adverse weather.

3.0 Monitoring and reviewing these arrangements

Premises managers should regularly review the arrangements and procedures in place.

4.0 Record Keeping

All risk assessments and records of inspections should be retained in line with The Shaw Education Trust Retention Schedule.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe in line with the Equality Act 2010. It does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

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