



## Red Weather Event Policy

Is this document a:

Policy 
  
 Procedure 
  
 Protocol 
  
 Guideline

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## **1. Scope and general Principles:**

- 1.1. This policy covers all HSE and Section 38 employees during Red Weather events
- 1.2. This policy is intended to apply in circumstances where Red Weather events occur
- 1.3. The provision of services is dependent on having employees to deliver them. Accordingly all employees are expected to make every effort to report for duty on time and remain on duty for their rostered period. However staff should always assess the risks involved in travelling to work before setting off on their journey. If an employee believes it is unsafe to travel s/he should contact his/her line manager or designate to discuss the situation.

## **2. Good Governance:**

Good governance is central to the effective operation of health services. While the HSE and Section 38s are not uniform in our structure, size, functions nor location, each organisation should have a plan to ensure business continuity in the event of severe weather to reflect our own responsibilities and circumstances. To this end the HSE have developed *HSE Severe Weather Planning Guidance for HSE Services, September 2017*, this guidance should be used by managers to develop a business continuity plan for their site.

The purpose of the Guidance is to assist managers in preparing for, responding to and recovering from the effects of a severe weather event which may affect the delivery of individual services.

To ensure that you have the most up to date version of the *HSE Severe Weather Planning Guidance for HSE Services, September 2017* please visit [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

## **3. Definitions:**

- 3.1. Red weather event: As defined by Met Eireann is as follows  
*“issue of RED level severe weather warnings should be a comparatively rare event and implies that recipients take action to protect themselves and/or their properties; this could be by moving their families out of the danger zone temporarily; by staying indoors; or by other specific actions aimed at mitigating the effects of the weather conditions”*.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2. Senior manager: A person at CEO/Hospital Manager grade in an Acute Hospital or Chief Officer in a Community Health Organisation or equivalent grade in corporate services.
- 3.3. TOIL: Where time off in lieu is granted it applies at standard time i.e. hour for hour.<sup>2</sup>

## **4. Policy activation:**

This policy shall be activated by the National Director of HR for the HSE who will be guided by red weather warnings issued by Met Eireann, National Emergency Co-ordination Centre and the National Office of Emergency Planning. The National Director of HR shall follow the communication flowchart outlined in Appendix 1 to notify the health services that this policy has been activated.

In addition, management at an appropriate senior level in a health service provider shall determine if weather conditions in their local area reflect the nationally advised Red Weather warnings. Based on this assessment these senior decision makers shall approve the implementation of the national policy in their area of responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Met Eireann website [www.met.ie/met-eireann-warning-system-explained](http://www.met.ie/met-eireann-warning-system-explained)

<sup>2</sup> HSE Guidelines on Terms and Conditions of Employment March 2017

### **Principles of the Policy:**

- 5. Paid Emergency Leave:** Where conditions prevent employees from attending work safely and the National Director of HR has invoked this policy and local senior managers have subsequently enacted this policy, paid emergency leave up to a maximum of 1 day during a red weather event may be granted, in circumstances where the manager has satisfied him/herself that the employee has made all reasonable efforts to attend work but has been prevented from so doing due to severe weather conditions prevailing. This applies to employees who were rostered to work on the day. Under no circumstance may a senior manager authorise more than 1 day paid emergency leave.

If the severe weather conditions continues beyond one day and in circumstances where an employee continues to be unable to attend work, he/she may avail of one of the following for the duration of their continued absence:

- Annual leave
- Unpaid leave (special leave without pay)
- Offset the time against accrual (eg, Flexileave, TOIL)

In the event of Red Weather conditions continuing beyond one day the provisions of Section 21 of this policy may be invoked.

- 6. Attendance at work:** The provision of health services to patients and clients during red weather events is dependent on the availability of staff. Staff are required to safely attempt to attend work during these periods so that our health services can continue to function. Past red weather experiences have demonstrated the heroic efforts made by staff to attend work to provide care for our service users. HSE HR Circular 17/2018 established arrangements for recognising the contributions of staff for maintaining services during red weather events and these are outlined below.

6.1 For those who attend work before their rostered start time recognition awards, as set out in Table 1, shall apply. These payments only apply when a red weather event is in operation locally.

Table 1. Recognition awards for requested early attendance

Early arrival	Recognition award
0-1 Hour before rostered start	€0
Greater than 1 hour but less than 4 hours before rostered start	€38.20
Greater than 4 hours before rostered start	€76.40

6.2 For those who attended work TOIL will be granted for hours worked, up to a maximum of 1 day

6.3 Circular 17/2018 set out to acknowledge the efforts of staff who remained onsite or in accommodation provided by their employer and who provided cover to keep vital services going

during a red weather event. When staff have been requested to stay over by their manager the following arrangements shall apply; for each incident the employee will receive a recognition award of €76.40 (an incident is a period per calendar day, i.e. 24 hours). This payment only applies when a Red Weather event is in operation locally.

6.4 Employees who presented for work will be paid the appropriate rate for the hours they attend, basic pay until whole time equivalent reached and overtime thereafter.

6.5 For employees **who are requested** to stay over on site during red weather events the employer shall strive to provide accommodation and an evening meal. Arrangements for these will be made by the employer. Employees who are requested by management to book into accommodation will have the accommodation cost (B&B basis), including the cost of one evening meal, reimbursed; this provision does not apply in circumstances where the employer has made arrangements for all invoicing to be sent directly to Accounts Payable.

7. **Where employee is released early from work:** A senior manager may in some circumstances during Red Weather events consider the early release of employees. Such consideration must take account of the needs of patients / clients / service users. Patient / client needs are the main priority and the senior manager must ensure that the needs of patients / clients can be met before any staff can be released. In such cases the employee will not be required to avail of annual leave in relation to shortfall of hours worked versus hours rostered to work on that day up to rostered finish time (for the avoidance of doubt this does not include flexitime hours). The manager must ensure that all reasonable steps to remain at work have been explored prior to granting approval for early release from work.
8. **Working from home during Red Weather events:** Only staff specifically requested by a Senior Manager may consider themselves as working from home. Such approval should be confirmed in writing and retained for reference purposes.
9. **Temporary reassignments during Red Weather events:** It may be necessary for management to temporarily reassign staff during a red weather event within their organisation. This would include reassignment from one unit to another. This reassignment may only occur when it can be done in a manner that maintains the safety and wellbeing of employees and is within their grade/scope of practice.
10. **Undertaking alternative duties during Red Weather events:** In certain circumstances employees may be required to carry out duties not normally associated with their post during periods where there are insufficient numbers of staff available to provide the appropriate level of care to patients. It is envisaged that this requirement will be used sparingly and will set no precedent. In the first instance volunteers from amongst the staff cohort will be sought, if no staff member/not enough staff is/are willing to volunteer, management will be required to assign staff to carry out the request.

Any decision taken which requires an employee to undertake alternative duties will be taken cognisant of competency, capabilities and skillset of the employee.

11. **Standing down of Red Weather warnings:** It is recognised that weather prediction is not an exact science. In circumstances where a forecasted Red Weather alert is stood down (due to

changing weather circumstances) employees are expected to attend work at the earliest opportunity.

## **12. Recovery from Red Weather events:**

- 12.1. It is recognised that the ending of a Red Weather period will not, in all circumstances, restore unobstructed access and egress to the workplace. For example in a red weather snow event access roads may not be open in all locations immediately following the ending of a red weather warning. In such circumstances employers may have to extend provisions for the wellbeing of staff who are **required and requested** to stay on site. In all such circumstances the matter will be addressed locally. In the event that the matter cannot be resolved locally it will be addressed under Section 21 of this policy.

### **Procedure to be followed**

- 13. Responsibility of The National Director of HR:** The National Director of HR will advise on the activation of this policy and communication will flow as per Appendix 1

## **14. Responsibility of local Senior Manager:**

- 14.1. Before enacting this policy the local senior manager must be satisfied that a red weather event is in operation in his/her area of responsibility.

14.2. Senior Managers should be constantly vigilant to the effects of severe weather conditions and all year round preparedness should be maintained; the “*HSE Severe Weather Planning Guidance for HSE Services, September 2017*”, will be of particular relevance and support in this.

## **15. Responsibility of Employees:**

- 15.1. Employees: who are unable to attend work in Red Weather events must contact their manager or designated point of contact in accordance with procedures set down in the Managing Attendance Policy.

## **16. Responsibility of Line Manager:**

- 16.1. Record the times and dates of employees in attendance during red weather events. Process applications for benefits applied for as per clause 5 of this policy
- 16.2. Ensure that records are kept for employees
- 16.3. To ensure that the department orientation is completed for an employee who is not normally employed on their site, as per Section 9 of this policy.
- 16.4. Line Managers should be constantly vigilant to the effects of severe weather conditions and all year round preparedness should be maintained; the “*HSE Severe Weather Planning Guidance for HSE Services, September 2017*”, will be of particular relevance and support in this.

## Miscellaneous

- 17. Pre approved leave:** An employee on pre-approved leave during a red weather event shall remain as such, i.e. they may not substitute their leave for emergency leave
- 18.** In exceptional emergency situations it may be necessary to cancel leave in order to maintain services. This will only be done in consultation with the affected employees and account will be taken of the plans made by the employee before any decision to cancel leave is made.
- 19. Recognition awards:** Recognition awards are taxed at the employee's normal tax rate and are non-pensionable.
- 20. Rotational, transferring, retiring and resigning employees:** In the event that an employee, whose work is rotational in nature, cannot avail of TOIL before leaving his/her employment, in circumstances where limited time existed between the Red Weather event and his/her departure, the TOIL may be taken in the employees next work location. Should a dispute arise regarding entitlement the matter may be referred to the Resolution group referred to in Section 21.1, who shall consider how this entitlement is to be discharged
- 21. Resolution of disputes:**
  - 21.1. It is agreed that a Joint Management/Union group will be established to deal with collective matters of dispute that arise in respect of the practical operation/interpretation of this policy.

This group will be comprised of 2 representatives from employers and 2 representatives from the staff panel. Decisions of this group will be final and binding on the parties.
  - 21.2 Individual employee matters of dispute will be addressed under their employers Grievance resolution policy. The resolution of individual grievances will take account of guidance issued by the joint management/union committee.
- 22. Policy review:** This policy will be reviewed 12 months after its implementation date and every 24 months thereafter.