

## Planning for the cold snap

12 December 2022

With weather alerts notified this week and other possible weather warnings over this winter, companies are advised to review their inclement weather policies and health and safety risk assessments. Consultation with staff in preparation for possible interruptions to the operations of their businesses is advised. Be Winter-Ready 2022-2023 has been prepared as part of the Government of Ireland initiative to assist households and businesses in preparing for winter and is available on:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/aa78b9-be-winter-ready/>

### Health and Safety

It is essential that employers revisit their risk assessments, in particular, where outdoor work is required. Prevention and protection (controls) must be adequate to protect employees working in inclement weather.

In winter the visibility of the worker may also be diminished as light levels are low and exacerbated by inclement weather. It is therefore important that all workers are visible at all times in the workplace (both indoors and outdoors). The use of High Vis Clothing is advised:

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications\\_and\\_forms/publications/work\\_related\\_vehicles/high\\_visibility\\_clothing\\_for\\_use\\_around\\_moving\\_vehicles.pdf](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/work_related_vehicles/high_visibility_clothing_for_use_around_moving_vehicles.pdf)

A series of publications that can help you prepare for winter, and the unique hazards presented by the harsh weather is available from the Health and Safety Authority on

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/winter\\_readiness/](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/winter_readiness/)

### Employment Considerations

Employers should consider updating or implementing an **'Inclement Weather and Disruption of Transport Policy'** and circulating it to employees for information.

Where extreme and hazardous weather conditions prevent or curtail employees from being able to travel to work and they have the potential to work from home, they should be encouraged to do so. For employees that are working from home, it is important to note that severe weather may also give rise to communications disruptions.

For employments where attendance at the workplace is required, it is prudent to plan for situations where employees are unable to attend work, or where organisations do not have work available, due to circumstances outside of their control.

Employees should be informed of the components of this plan that may impact on them in advance. Ideally the ***'Inclement Weather and Disruption of Transport Policy'*** will outline processes and procedures associated with such an event and will have been made available to the employees.

The company's approach and planned response should be clarified to employees as early as possible after people are put on notice of the forecast of an extreme weather event and the planned response. It is critical that managers are urgently informed of the organisation's position, to ensure consistency across the business. It is imperative to be aware of any custom and practice in the organisation or contractual clause, which may override this organisation position.

Organisations may need to examine situations where employees make an effort to come into work and are delayed or have to leave early in order to avail of limited public transport, or where weather conditions deteriorate during the working day. Where a site is no longer accessible employers need to consider the way to communicate this to employees.

### **COVID19, Flus, Coughs and Colds:- all winter bugs**

Employers are prompted to encourage all in the workplace to top up their winter vaccine protection against COVID 19 and flu. Prevention of infection and transmission is key. It is important that the lessons learnt in the depths of the pandemic are not forgotten. Hand washing is crucial. Where COVID19 infection is suspected the advice given by the HSE should be followed on <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

Employees, when able to do so, should be encouraged to work from home rather than in the workplace when presenting with respiratory symptoms or unwell.

As always, you can contact our HR Executive Fiona Mulligan on [fiona.mulligan@sfa.ie](mailto:fiona.mulligan@sfa.ie) or ring (01) 6051557 if you have any questions on the above.

Access up to date information from the Irish Meteorological Service  
<https://www.met.ie/warnings/today>

### **Additional Information is available on:**

#### **Winter driving**

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/vehicles\\_at\\_work/driving\\_for\\_work/winter\\_driving\\_tips/](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/vehicles_at_work/driving_for_work/winter_driving_tips/)

#### **Hi-Vis clothing for use around moving vehicles**

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications\\_and\\_forms/publications/work\\_related\\_vehicles/high\\_visibility\\_clothing\\_for\\_use\\_around\\_moving\\_vehicles.pdf](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/work_related_vehicles/high_visibility_clothing_for_use_around_moving_vehicles.pdf)