

Planning for adverse weather

Whether or not we see a repeat of last year's big freeze, it makes sense for employers to ensure that they have a policy regarding adverse weather conditions. As an employer you need to be clear of your obligations and your employees will welcome clarity.

The position for your business will depend upon the particular terms within your employee's contracts of employment. Key issues that should be set out include:

- the procedure for reporting to managers
- obtaining authorisation for an absence
- working at home
- the policy on pay; or
- the use of holiday entitlement or flexi time

Employees who are absent from work due to extreme weather or other travel disruptions are not generally entitled to be paid for lost time, however it is also important to be flexible and some employers may decide to pay for some or all of lost time as a gesture of goodwill.

Allowing staff to work from home or use holiday entitlement may be an alternative solution and can contribute to improved morale. Alternatively you may ask employees to make up the lost time, usually within a set timeframe.

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You should not make deductions from an employee's pay unlawfully, for example if you have decided to close the premises. You may only make deductions for 'unauthorised' absences.

Whatever you decide to do, it must be applied fairly to all staff to avoid any claims of discrimination arising, for example if an absence relates to covering childcare because a school has been closed.

Don't forget that you have a duty of care over the health and safety of your employees. You will need to consider how the weather impacts upon this in your business, for example will you still expect deliveries to be made on icy roads? Beware of asking staff to try and come in if national weather reports are advising everyone to stay at home.

Severe weather often seems to come with very little warning, so employers are advised to address the issue now in good time.

For further advice on your redundancy rights and other employment issues please contact a member of our Employment Team on on York **01904 716 000** or Wetherby on **01937 583 210**.

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