



RISK ADVISORY NOTICE 04: ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Introduction

Adverse weather conditions refer to unfavourable or potentially harmful weather conditions that present an increased risk to safety and health.

Consequences

Slips, trips and falls incidents can increase significantly during adverse weather conditions, particularly with, rain, ice and snow. Furthermore, severe weather can lead to increased numbers presenting at A&E departments across the country as well as impacting on lost time and absenteeism in public and private industry. Other consequences include the increase in claims due to property damage.

Duty of Care

All Delegated State Authorities (DSA's) have a duty of care to both employees and members of the public entering and using their facilities/services. A DSA must take appropriate reasonable controls to protect these persons using their facilities/services in adverse weather conditions. A strategic approach should be taken with consideration given to the place of work, getting to work and work activities.

Risk Management Controls: A Strategic Approach

A risk assessment should be conducted by the DSA to determine the risk management controls required.

Develop an Adverse Weather Plan:

Incorporate this plan into existing Emergency Response Plan and/or Business Continuity Plan. The plan should include:

- Ensuring the DSA has the **resource requirements, materials and equipment** available for dealing with localised flooding and clearing or gritting external surfaces when required e.g. signage; barriers; sandbags; mats; mops.
- A **preventative maintenance** plan to protect the building e.g. the heating, frozen pipes, braches of trees and the structural integrity of the premises etc.
- A **policy** on getting to work and work activities if severe weather conditions arise e.g. road closures due to flooding.
- Procedures for ensuring **safe access and egress to the workplace** e.g. who is going to raise the alert when icy conditions or flooding arises? When are surfaces going to be gritted? Who is going to carry out the gritting or placing of sandbags? Who is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of grit and sandbags?
- Clear **roles and responsibilities** to cope with such situations e.g. management responsibility at regional and local level. In buildings where there is no designated service/accommodation staff, the most

senior person(s) in the building is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are put in place and implemented.

During Adverse Weather:

- **Direction:** Ensure the adverse weather plan is followed and there is clear direction and cohesion from local management and key personnel.
- **Communication:** Ensure all employees/ customers/ visitors/ public are aware of the hazards and risks associated with adverse weather conditions, particularly the dangers in the external areas. E.g. Issue an information bulletin to all staff on precautions they can take during the period which could include ensuring windscreen is fully defrosted before commencing to drive in frosty conditions or to never drive through flooded roadways.
- **Control Measures:** Take a proactive stance when implementing control measures. Risk assess the various areas. As a priority put sandbags at any openings where water could gain access and clear or grit all access routes and areas with high pedestrian use e.g. foot paths, walkways, entrances and exits within your control. Other areas should be prioritised thereafter.
- **Record:** All relevant documentation and records should be retained on file e.g. who did the gritting, where it was done and when it was done (date and time).
- **Report:** Ensure all accidents and incidents (including Third Party property damage) are reported to the SCA in accordance with your DSA's procedures e.g. via online system National Incident Management System (NIMS), or directly to the SCA. Report any damage to property to Accommodation/Estates immediately for resolution and put in place interim control measures as required.
- **Claims:** In the event of a claim the DSA will be requested to provide evidence of maintenance of buildings and grounds, specifically documentation and records.

If a third party's property is damaged there must be evidence of negligence on the part of the DSA. In the absence of evidence of negligence on the part of the DSA, the DSA has no legal liability to the third party, and the SCA will contest any claim brought against the DSA.

Further Information and Resource

The Office of Emergency Planning

<http://www.winterready.ie/>