



With all of us in mind

# Adverse Weather Plan

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to ensure South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides a robust and resilient response during severe weather. This plan supports Trust arrangements in response to severe weather and is fully informed and supported by the Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP) Severe Weather Plan.
- 1.2. This document outlines the various consequences of Heat, Cold, Storms and Flooding and details Trust roles and responsibilities and other responding organisations.
- 1.3. Severe weather is identified within the South and West Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum, Community Risk Register along with their associated impacts and likelihood ratings.
- 1.4. The Plan ensures a fair and consistent approach is taken by the Trust when normal, daily travel arrangements of Trust members of staff to and from their normal place of work are disrupted by severe weather.
- 1.5. In applying this Plan, the Trust recognises its priority and duty is to ensure there is skilled staff on duty to provide an appropriate level of service to its patients.

## **2. SCOPE OF PLAN**

- 2.1. This Plan covers all services and employees of the Trust.
- 2.2. This Plan covers all Trust operational hours from day only community services and office functions to 24 hour, 7 day per week services.
- 2.3. The scope of the plan covers the operational processes for mobilising Trust resources to respond to severe weather conditions which have the potential to significantly impact on Trust services and / or may require additional resources to implement effective control measures.

Links to other plans and documents

- 2.4. This document should be read in conjunction with: Emergency Preparedness, Resilience & Response Policy, Major Incident Plan; Business Continuity Management Procedure, local business continuity plans and HR documents.

### **3. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1. The following specific duties and responsibilities apply within the Trust.
- 3.2. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the management of the Trust, including ensuring it has in place robust arrangements for business continuity and service recovery.
- 3.3. The Director of Human Resources and Workforce Development is responsible for the implementation of this Plan in operational services during severe weather.
- 3.4. The Head of Security and Emergency Resilience is responsible for ensuring business continuity processes are managed in accordance with the requirements of Department of Health guidance and ISO 22301.
- 3.5. The Emergency Planning Adviser is responsible for ensuring amendments to the Plan are made in a timely manner and reported to the Health & Safety and Emergency Preparedness Trust Action Group as an agenda item and to the Trust Board as deemed necessary.
- 3.6. Directors/Deputy Directors are responsible for ensuring this Plan is followed in their areas of responsibility during severe weather and that local business continuity plans reference to the effects that adverse weather can have on their services and that plans are in place to run services as normal as possible. Appendix 1 contains a checklist to consider.
- 3.7. Managers will be responsible for ensuring wards and services are adequately staffed and managers should have early discussions with staff that may have difficulty attending work due to severe weather to ensure suitable plans are in place to deal with any problem should it arise. Managers should maintain a register of staff who live nearby but normally work at another unit or base to ensure the availability of those staff when inclement weather prevents them from traveling to their normal place of work. The decision on the genuineness of the absence is that of the senior line manager but this power may be delegated to an appropriate deputy. Staff arriving late (or with the permission of the line manager leaving early) because of inclement weather will, if the reason of bad weather is accepted, be paid at the rate they would have received for that day if normal conditions prevailed. Accurate records should be kept by the managers of the implementation of this Plan, with particular reference to difficulties experienced or problems encountered.

3.8. All Management and staff must ensure they are familiar with the contents of this plan and their individual roles within these plans.

#### 4. EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED

4.1. The table below details the different terms used in the warnings sent out and what the Meteorological Office definitions of the terms are:

<b>TERMINOLOGY</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>Early Warning</b>	A warning several days in advance and usually updated daily until the event has passed
<b>Flash Warning</b>	A warning given for an event with six hours' notice or fewer
<b>Weather Watch</b>	These detail a lower level of risk and are generally for information only
<b>Heavy Snow</b>	2cm per hour of snowfall or more expected for at least 2 hours
<b>Blizzards/Drifting Snow</b>	Heavy snow combined with winds of more than 30 mph and visibility lower than 200 m
<b>Heavy Rain</b>	Either 15 mm within 3 hours, likely to cause flooding where ground is saturated or 25 cm in 24 hours
<b>Dense Fog</b>	Visibility is less than 50 m
<b>Freezing Rain</b>	Rain will freeze on contact with untreated roads and surfaces
<b>Severe Gales</b>	Defined as gusts of 70 mph or more
<b>Severe Gales/Storms</b>	Defined as gusts of 80 mph or more
<b>Severe Weather</b>	Snow, ice, floods, fog and severe wind which render extremely hazardous journeys by road. This can be by private or public transport
<b>Extremely Hazardous</b>	Those conditions in which the police and/or appropriate motoring organisations advise people not to make unnecessary journeys or indeed not to travel at all.

#### 5. COMMON SEVERE WEATHER DEFINITIONS

Heatwave

5.1. Heatwave is defined by forecasts of day and night time temperatures and their duration by the Met office; for example in Yorkshire a forecast of day time temperatures exceeding 29c and night time temperatures above 15c for 2-3 days or more.

5.2. The Heat-Health alert system planning system based on the forecasting of Heatwaves by the Met Office who provide a level of alert with actions to be taken for each level for all, including the Health community.

#### Cold Weather

5.3. Heavy snow is defined as snow falling at a rate of at least 2 cm per hour or more, expected for at least two hours. Geographic extent is not considered, and sometimes the event can be quite localised, but the Met Office will always try to indicate in the bulletin the areas that are affected.

5.4. Widespread ice is defined as when rain falls on to surfaces with temperatures at or below zero; or condensation occurs on surfaces at or below zero; or already wet surfaces fall to or below zero. The ice is usually clear and difficult to distinguish from a wet surface. It usually forms in sheets. Warnings are issued when any depth of ice is expected over a widespread area. Warnings will also be issued after snowfall when compacted snow is expected to cause an ice risk.

5.5. The term widespread indicates that icy surfaces will be found extensively over the area defined in the Met Office bulletin.

#### Flooding

5.6. Flooding is a constant hazard to life and property. We know from the Environment Agency's national assessment of flood risk (published June 2009) that:

- one in six homes in England is at risk of flooding;
- over 2.4 million properties are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea in England, of which nearly half a million are at significant risk; and
- One million of these are also vulnerable to surface water flooding, with a further 2.8 million properties susceptible to surface water flooding alone.

5.7. As well as flooding from rivers, the sea and surface water, there are significant risks for some communities from groundwater flooding and water from failed or overflowing reservoirs. The scope of the National Flood Emergency Framework extends to these risks too.

#### Storms and Gales

5.8. Wind speeds exceeding 60 mph resulting in localised / widespread damage to infrastructure and transportation.

## 6. NATIONAL SEVERE WEATHER WARNING SERVICE (NSWWS)

- 6.1. The NSWWS is provided by the Met Office in order to provide the public, emergency services and other responding agencies with timely warnings of impending severe weather. The warnings give a percentage probability of a particular event disrupting regions of the United Kingdom.
- 6.2. The information is supplied to the Trust by email and up to the minute data is also available from [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)
- 6.3. The basic messages associated with each of the warning states are:

	No severe weather
	Be aware
	Be prepared
	Take action

## 7. NOTIFICATION OF SEVERE WEATHER WARNINGS

- 7.1. The Trust contact for the Meteorological Office is the Emergency Planning team.
- 7.2. When severe weather is expected the Emergency Planning team will share information via a pre-identified email cascade system that has been set up. This information can then be cascaded via the nominated team leader to all staff as appropriate to their service areas.
- 7.3. On receipt of information departments are expected to review local contingencies.
- 7.4. If any individual service is experiencing an adverse impact as a result of the weather, managers must contact their relevant manager during normal office hours or the On Call Director out of hours to make them aware. Local business continuity plans will be activated if appropriate.
- 7.5. All managers must remind staff of the need to take adequate precautions such as only making necessary journeys and carry appropriate provisions in their vehicles. This may include bottled water or extra warm clothing. Staff should ensure that their mobile phone is charged and lone working procedures are in place.

7.6. Outside of office hours the On Call Director will maintain a watching brief to ensure potential impacts on Trust services are monitored and appropriate action taken to protect services.

## 8. POTENTIAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF SEVERE WEATHER

Heatwave Trust Heatwave plan documents are available at - <http://nww.swyt.nhs.uk/health-safety/Documents/Heatwave%20Plan%202015.doc>

8.1. The main causes of illness and death during a heatwave are respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Additionally, there are specific heat related illnesses including: Heat cramps – caused by dehydration and loss of electrolytes, often following exercise; Heat rash – small, red, itchy papules; Heat oedema – mainly in the ankles, due to vasodilation and retention of fluid; Heat syncope – dizziness and fainting, due to dehydration, vasodilation, cardiovascular disease and certain medications; Heat exhaustion – is more common. It occurs as a result of water or sodium depletion, with nonspecific features of malaise, vomiting and circulatory collapse, and is present when the core temperature is between 37°C and 40°C. Left untreated, heat exhaustion may evolve into heatstroke; Heatstroke – can become a point of no return whereby the body's thermoregulation mechanism fails. This leads to a medical emergency, with symptoms of confusion; disorientation; convulsions; unconsciousness; hot dry skin; and core body temperature exceeding 40°C for between 45 minutes and eight hours. It can result in cell death, organ failure, brain damage or death. Heatstroke can be either classical or exertional (e.g. in athletes).

8.2. There are certain factors that increase an individual's risk during a heatwave. These include:

**Older age:** especially women over 75 years old, or those living on their own who are socially isolated, or in a care home;

**Chronic and severe illness:** including heart conditions, diabetes, respiratory or renal insufficiency, Parkinson's disease or severe mental illness.

**Medications that potentially affect renal function,** the body's ability to sweat, thermoregulation or electrolyte balance can make this group more vulnerable to the effects of heat; Inability to adapt behaviour to keep cool: having Alzheimer's, a disability, being bed bound too much alcohol, babies and the very young;

**Environmental factors and overexposure:** living in urban areas and south facing top floor flats, being homeless, activities or jobs that are in hot places or outdoors and include high levels of physical exertion.



8.3. In a moderate heatwave, it is mainly the high risk groups mentioned above who are affected. However, during an extreme heatwave such as the one affecting France in 2003, normally fit and healthy people can also be affected.

#### Cold Weather:

The impact of cold weather on health is predictable and mostly preventable. Direct effects of winter weather include an increase in incidence of: heart attack; stroke; respiratory disease; influenza; falls and injuries; hypothermia.

8.4. Indirect effects of cold include mental health illnesses, such as depression, and carbon monoxide poisoning from poorly maintained or poorly ventilated boilers, cooking and heating appliances and heating.

8.5. The Cold Weather Plan for England 2015 ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/468160/CWP\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/468160/CWP_2015.pdf)) states that key groups considered to be particularly at-risk in the event of severe cold weather are; Older people (over 75 years old); otherwise “frail” older people; children under the age of five; people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, stroke or TIA, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or diabetes people with mental ill-health that reduces individual’s ability to self-care (including dementia); people with learning difficulties; people assessed as being at risk of, or having had, recurrent falls ; people who are housebound or otherwise low mobility; people living in deprived circumstances; people living in houses with mould; people who are fuel poor; elderly people who live alone and do not have additional social services support; homeless or people sleeping rough; other marginalised groups.

#### Flooding:

8.6. The health impacts of floods are wide ranging, and depend on a number of factors. However the immediate health impacts of floods include drowning, injuries and hypothermia.

8.7. Health risks also are associated with the evacuation of patients, loss of health workers and loss of health infrastructure including essential drugs and supplies.

8.8. In the medium-term, infected wounds, complications of injury, poisoning, poor mental health and communicable diseases may also be indirect effects of flooding.

- 8.9. In the long-term, chronic disease, disability and poor mental health are the potential legacy.
- 8.10. The link below provides PHE advice for frontline responders on the potential mental health impacts of flooding. Mental health and flooding [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/483387/Health\\_advice\\_about\\_mental\\_health\\_following\\_floods\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/483387/Health_advice_about_mental_health_following_floods_2015.pdf)

## **9. PRIORITY SERVICES**

- 9.1. During any severe weather disruption it will be highly unlikely that all community based visits can be maintained at normal levels, therefore priority must be given in the first instance to services identified by each BDU.

## **10. TRANSPORT**

- 10.1. Severe weather may affect the transport infrastructure and in some cases cause damage with long lasting effects. If during severe weather it becomes clear staff will be unable to use their normal mode of transport to maintain community based services, alternative transport arrangements will need to be made in order to support the priority services to at risk individuals.
- 10.2. Where specialist 4 x 4 transport is the only means of getting access to an at risk patient or to get key staff to work, when all other means have been assessed, a request for support can be made to the Emergency Planning team (in working hours) to see what assistance may be available from within the Trust or externally (there is not a guaranteed availability due to weather, times, locations), business continuity plans should take into account for adverse weather and staffing issues.
- 10.3. Work related driving (Travel at Work Policy & Guidance) <http://nww.swyt.nhs.uk/docs/Documents/1078.doc>
- Employees who undertake driving activities in the course of their work should liaise closely with their manager to make sure that risks in the event of adverse weather are assessed in a systematic and ongoing way. Alternative systems and methods of work may have to be adopted to reduce risk as far as is possible.

## **11. MANAGING THE WORKFORCE DURING SEVERE WEATHER**

### Principles

- 11.1. The Trust recognises severe weather can prevent employees from reaching their normal place of employment and will ensure the health and safety of its employees is not compromised by allowing affected employees immediate access to leave entitlement (special, paid, flexi or unpaid depending on the circumstances). No employee will be required to travel/attend for work if it is unsafe to do so. Agile working principles must be followed by those staff that are deemed agile.
- 11.2. It is expected employees will make every reasonable effort to reach their normal place of employment or an agreed alternative location. However, employees are not expected to, and should not put themselves or others at risk.
- 11.3. Employees who live in areas of the county where historically they have suffered difficulties in getting to work during periods of adverse weather should be prepared to make appropriate arrangements in relation to attendance at work.
- 11.4. It is recognised there will inevitably be occasions when weather conditions are so severe that some employees will either be prevented from getting to their normal place of work or will be late and/or need to leave early.
- 11.5. Where a member of staff considers they are unable to get to and from work as a consequence of inclement weather, they must discuss this with their line manager and agree an alternative. Alternatives may include going to another Trust unit or facility which is more accessible from home rather than their usual place of work or working from home.
- 11.6. Staff are expected to be able to walk up to three miles to work if it is considered safe due to the weather conditions by the Police and/or other appropriate organisations.
- 11.7. Payment of salary/wages to those who do not attend work during severe weather should not be granted as a matter of course. Trust Senior Managers must thoroughly investigate the circumstances of each individual case and payment should only be authorised when the manager is satisfied the conditions in this Plan have been met.

- 11.8. The employee must prove they made all possible efforts to get to work i.e. that a genuine attempt was made. In this respect it would not be sufficient for the member of staff to claim that just their normal method of travel was unavailable. Staff would be expected to have explored all reasonable alternatives.
- 11.9. To ensure this Plan is applied as consistently as possible, the Human Resources Department should be consulted should Managers might wish to refer to them in making decisions on their own staff.

#### Health and Safety

- 11.10. The Trust has a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonable practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work.
- 11.11. There is a duty of every employer to take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of its workers in the workplace.
- 11.12. Employees are also under a general duty to take reasonable care of their own physical and mental health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- 11.13. Severe weather may have a number of implications for the Trust's business.
- 11.14. The Trust will not encourage its employees to travel in dangerous weather, either during working hours or when travelling to and from work and employees should not feel pressured to risk their safety to get into their place of work.
- 11.15. Line managers should use their discretion when dealing with the issues that arise and deal with case by case.

#### Leaving Early

- 11.16. During severe weather, where there is concern for travel arrangements of staff, the decision about when to allow staff to leave work early will normally be taken by the appropriate manager.
- 11.17. It is recognised staff will be anxious about their domestic arrangements and staff will be allowed to use the Trust's telephone systems where appropriate.

- 11.18. Staff whose circumstances make it essential that they are allowed to leave earlier, e.g. those who have dependents who have no other carers available or those with particular health problems, will be allowed to leave at their manager's discretion and subject to the needs of the service.
- 11.19. Regular updates on the prevailing weather and road conditions will be received by the Trust who will ensure these are communicated across the organisation. Staff should also check local Council/media websites for updates and listen to local radio stations.

#### Inability to Attend Work

- 11.20. In all circumstances of inability to attend for work or late arrival, the employee must report the fact to their line manager at the earliest opportunity. The standard working day/shift is defined as the normal working hours for those employees who have fixed working hours.
- 11.21. If an employee is not able to make the journey to work, the following options should be discussed and agreed by the Line Manager: Agree a change in your working arrangements, for example 'swap' shifts on the rota; Make up the lost time at a later date by working an additional shift or hours; Take annual leave; Take unpaid leave if your annual leave entitlement is exhausted.
- 11.22. As an alternative to the granting of leave an employee may, if appropriate, be required to attend at a different workplace or work from home (see below).

#### Arriving late (all days of severe weather)

- 11.23. Where the Line Manager is satisfied an employee has been prevented from attending work by their normal starting time due to adverse weather, any lateness may not be penalised in terms of sanctions under any Trust policies.

#### Leaving early (all days of severe weather)

- 11.24. In circumstances where early release may be justified, the most senior person in the building will make the decision and advise all managers when it is appropriate to advise employees to leave work early or work from other locations i.e. home. In all cases employees will be credited with their standard working day/shift, or the actual hours worked, whichever is the greater.

## Working from Home

- 11.25. In certain circumstances managers may agree an employee can work from home. Where home working is authorised, the employee will be credited with normal or actual hours, whichever is greater.

## Closure of Place of Work

- 11.26. Where a decision is taken by the Trust to close a place of work due to adverse weather, affected employees may be required to attend at an alternative place of work or work from home. If neither of these applies, employees will be entitled to paid leave for their normal hours of work for the duration of the closure.

## Employees with Carer Responsibilities

- 11.27. These employees must ensure they have emergency care arrangements in place to deal with disruption to their normal care arrangements during severe weather. If this is not possible the employee should discuss the matter with their line manager and will be entitled to take annual/ flexi/ unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notice of the intention to take leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

## Attendance at an Alternative Place of Work

- 11.28. In some circumstances, Trust staff may be able to assist in providing services in other Trust wards and buildings in which they do not normally work. They should contact the unit or ward to establish whether or not they can provide assistance in the circumstances.
- 11.29. If staff are unable to travel to their normal work base, they may be able to work from another base which is closer to home and within a reasonable distance.
- 11.30. In this circumstance, staff would not be expected to travel no more than three miles on foot if weather conditions permit.
- 11.31. Where severe weather disrupts the normal activities of Trust staff, every effort should be made by the senior member of staff, who has been able to make it to the team base, to contact those patients considered to be vulnerable or who have appointments that day.

## Home Visits

11.32. If staff find they are unable to maintain their home visits due to it being deemed unsafe to travel, they must contact their manager for advice and contact the client at the earliest opportunity.

11.33. Wherever possible alternative arrangements should always be agreed and put in place prior to the advent of adverse weather.

## **12. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

12.1. All senior management must ensure their staff are aware and familiar with this Plan.

12.2. The Trust has the responsibility to ensure its business continuity arrangements are tested on a regular basis. Exercising the Trust response to a severe weather event may form the basis for testing these arrangements and this will be designed by the Emergency Planning Adviser.

12.3. This Plan will be regularly updated to take account of organisational changes and new national guidance.

## **13. REFERENCES, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

Cross reference to other procedural documents

Risk Assessment policy <http://nww.swyt.nhs.uk/docs/Documents/1001.doc>

Met Office webpage

[http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings/?regionName=yh&from=rss&sn=1C51FF6E-3C9E-D89A-32E1-733CBCC2F45E\\_1\\_YH](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings/?regionName=yh&from=rss&sn=1C51FF6E-3C9E-D89A-32E1-733CBCC2F45E_1_YH)

All current policies and procedures are accessible to all staff on the Trust intranet (on the home page, click on 'Policies and Procedures').

## Appendix 1

### Severe Weather Warning - Contingency Checklist

#### Wards and Departments

- Revisit relevant Policies with Staff
- Consider staff cover/flexible shifts
- Contact off duty staff to advise
- Consider adequacy of essential stocks/supplies
- Review patients ready/able to be discharged
- Preparatory work to cancel services if necessary
- Community staff to consider prioritising home visits
- Ensure any important computer-held information is backed up
- Review non-essential meetings and journeys
- Report any concerns/key issues to senior manager
- Any other local issues