



Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
Health and Social Care Trust



Provisions for Staff Attendance and Non-Attendance at Work during Spells of Inclement Weather

1. INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service recognises that on occasions weather conditions may impact on an employee's ability to attend their workplace. In such circumstances this guidance should be followed.

It is acknowledged that individual circumstances will vary greatly and therefore it is unlikely that this guidance will cover all eventualities. Therefore, management discretion may be necessary if there are exceptional circumstances.

2. SCOPE

This guidance applies to all NIAS employees irrespective of age, race, colour, religion, disability, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or marital status, domestic circumstances, political affiliation or trade union membership. All employees will be treated in a fair and equitable manner.

3. DEFINITION

What is Inclement Weather?

'Inclement weather' can be defined as snow, ice, fog, floods, which render extremely hazardous travelling conditions by both public and private transport.

'Extremely hazardous' is defined as those conditions in which the Police and/or appropriate motoring organisations advise people not to make unnecessary journeys or indeed travel at all.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trust recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer for providing a safe working environment for its employees, and a safe environment for its patients, visitors and other members of the public. It will discharge these responsibilities through its managers and will expect its staff to comply with policies and procedures and to act at all times in a responsible manner.

Employees must:

- Make reasonable efforts to attend work during periods of inclement weather;
- Be aware of and comply with the principles of this guidance;
- Make sure they know who to contact when reporting absence or lateness due to inclement weather;
- Make every effort to contact the appropriate person as soon as they are aware that they will be unable to attend work at the expected time, and at least within one hour of the start of the shift. Failure of a member of staff to notify an appropriate manager that they are unable to attend work may count

as unauthorised absence and may be considered as misconduct under the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure.

- Complete appropriate documentation to cover the period of absence following discussion with their line manager e.g. annual leave request form/leave card as soon as reasonably practical on return to work.
- Where inability to attend work is due to school closure, changes to childcare etc., staff should follow the Carer's Leave Policy.

Managers should:

- Ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities for communicating with the Trust about potential problems caused by inclement weather in accordance with this guidance;
- Ensure that appropriate records are kept relating to time lost due to inclement weather, and all appropriate request forms e.g. annual leave/short term unpaid leave are received and actioned accordingly;
- Ensure that where appropriate, notification is properly and promptly provided to Payroll via time sheets/staff amendment forms by closedown date;
- Consider each case on its merits whilst ensuring a fair and consistent approach.

Human Resources Department is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the provisions within this guidance are in line with employment legislation, best practice and HPSS guidelines;
- Providing advice to ensure consistent and fair management of the guidance;
- Providing advice on the management of individual cases as appropriate.

Arriving Late to Work/Leaving Early or Needs to Leave Early

- If a member of staff is not able to complete the full hours of their working day due to the impact of inclement weather on their travel arrangements, travel time, etc. they will be expected to make up the time lost either by using annual leave/flexi time/TOIL to cover the time lost.
- There is no entitlement for staff to be paid if absent during inclement weather.

Re-imburement of Time off / owed

Managers should take a flexible and supportive approach with staff whose working day has been affected by the weather conditions. The following options should be discussed with the member of staff in terms of re-imburement of time owed:

- Use of time off in lieu as a result of hours already worked over and above contracted hours

- Use of annual leave
- Use of unpaid leave
- Special leave
- Work the time owed within a 3 month period

Any combination of the above can be used to cover the period of absence.

Continuation of Bad Weather Conditions

The purpose of this guidance is to cater for initial, emergency situations. However it is recognised that in some instances bad weather may continue and public services may be affected e.g. travel, schools, etc. In this situation staff should discuss their individual situation with their manager in order that working arrangements can be agreed.

5. EQUALITY

The Trust recognises that the health and welfare of its staff is of the utmost importance. The Trust recognises that equality impacts on all aspects of its day to day operations and has produced an equality policy statement to reflect this. All policies and procedures are assessed in accordance with the Equality Screening Procedure.

6. COMMUNICATION

The guidance will be promoted and effectively communicated to all employees. The objective is that all employees should be fully aware of their responsibilities during spells of inclement weather.

7. REVIEW

This guidance will be reviewed annually.

AGREEMENT on the above guidance has been agreed between Management and Trade Unions via the Terms & Conditions Joint Consultative Forum and will come into effect on 12 December 2014.