

## Lancashire County Council Occupational Health and Safety Management System Corporate Health & Safety Guidance

### Severe weather including winter gritting

The aim of this guidance is to assist managers and headteachers to deal with the health and safety issues arising from severe weather conditions. A general risk assessment for severe weather that can be adapted to reflect local circumstances is available to assist premises managers on the [school portal](#) and [Intranet](#).

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### Part A - Guidance for premises managers

#### 1. The health and safety issues relating to adverse weather conditions

During the different seasons, adverse weather conditions can create potentially hazardous situations, for example, snow or icy conditions, heat exposure, high winds and heavy rainfall.

Each year employees, contractors, pupils, visitors and service users are injured as a result of slipping and falling on ice and snow. Consequently, there are a number of related issues that may require the introduction of on-site control measures as part of your risk assessment process.

The control measures may include:

- clearance of ice and snow
- gritting
- ensuring safe access and egress
- car parking facilities
- traffic management and protecting pedestrian routes
- absorbent mats placed at building entrances
- reorganisation of work activities
- provision of adequate resources to implement and monitor any additional control measures

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## **2. Adverse weather conditions to be considered as part of the risk assessment process**

### **Ice and snow**

All gritting should be confined within a site's boundaries unless there is good reason to extend beyond this to the public footpath eg if a school crossing patrol is located directly in front of the school's main exit gates then the school may decide to clear the public footpath from the gate to the road. If a premises manager arranges for a section of public footpath (area outside of their boundary) to be gritted it becomes their responsibility and a duty of care is owed to maintain the condition of the gritted area. It is unlikely the school or premises manager will be sued or held responsible if someone is injured on a section of public footpath that has been cleared by them if the area was cleared carefully. Premises managers should document their reason(s) for clearing any section of public footpath of snow or ice along with any control measures put in place to ensure the area remains safe. It may also be appropriate to liaise with the local council to check on local gritting arrangements.

Heads of establishments and premises managers are responsible for ensuring the means of access to their establishment within their boundary is safe for both employees, pupils and visitors. They must ensure that adequate arrangements are made so that the risks from snow and ice are minimised "*as far as is reasonably practicable*".

It is accepted that it is not possible to immediately remove every piece of snow or ice but those responsible for premises are required to exercise careful judgement and prioritise de-icing and salting of key access routes.

The approved code of practice that supports the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations states that "arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice." This may involve gritting, snow clearing and closure of some routes. Signage will be required to direct building users to the safe route.

Links to further useful information can be found at the end of this guidance.

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## **Heavy rainfall/flooding**

Flooding is a potential hazard for individuals and can cause severe property damage, causing disruption to normal daily activities. An emergency plan should be in place if the threat of flood is likely. The plan must consider the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, pupils and visitors.

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## **Periods of excessive heat**

In times of excessive heat, individuals can suffer in the short term from sunburn, heat stroke and sometimes dehydration. However, in the long-term individuals need to be aware that too much exposure to the sun can increase the potential of developing skin cancer. Some individuals may be more susceptible including those with; fair or freckled skin that doesn't tan, or that goes red (burns before tanning); red or fair hair; and individuals with moles.

It is important to remember that the 3 or 4 hours around midday are when the sun is most intense; even on cloudy days ultraviolet light can filter through.

Further information and advice can be found on [Sun, UV and Cancer](#) (Cancer Research UK) and [Keep Your Top On leaflet \(INDG 147\)](#) (HSE).

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## **High winds**

During high winds it is important to consider the potential impact this could have on the normal daily routines of the service. Heavy winds can cause chaos and leave premises without power and disrupt travel by road and rail.

Inevitably when the winds are high there is the potential for flying debris from roofs, gardens, etc, therefore any loose objects with the potential to cause damage or harm should be secured if possible eg ensuring that all doors and windows are fastened. When high winds are forecast some trees or branches may fall down. For your safety, stay away from fallen power lines, flooded areas and debris. However, once the winds have died down, an inspection of any damage will have to be carried out to identify any remedial action required. Guidance in relation to tree safety is available on the Tree safety pages of the health, safety and quality web site: [school portal](#) or [Intranet](#).

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### **3. How to carry out an assessment of winter gritting and snow/ice clearance**

Premises managers must have a documented risk assessment that identifies any significant risks to the safety of the premises, its occupants, or users due to severe weather conditions. The person undertaking the risk assessment must have a sound knowledge of the work involved and be able to develop a plan of action based on their findings. The risk assessment must include any control measures put in place to reduce any identified risks to as low as reasonably practicable. A general risk assessment for severe weather is available

on the [school portal](#) or [Intranet](#) that can be adapted by premises managers and headteachers to meet their local requirements.

The premise manager or headteacher must ensure that arrangements are in place for the risk assessment to be reviewed regularly, including after any significant change in circumstances or accident/incident.

The risk assessment process should include the following:

- Ensuring staff are made aware of their responsibilities and duties. It may be necessary for site staff to commence work earlier to implement the gritting/clearance plan.
- Identification of any resources required to complete the task, including number of persons, time, grit, grit spreader, grit bins, shovels, trolley or wheelbarrow and personal protective equipment. All the relevant information about equipment to be used (manufacturers' instructions, user guidance etc.) should be consulted and users made aware of how to use equipment correctly and safely.
- Prioritisation of access and egress routes that are most used, including emergency exit routes. Further consideration may be needed to relocate the fire assembly point temporarily if this cannot be accessed safely. In the event of an emergency consideration should be given to the safest route to vacate the establishment for all persons.
- Ensuring that any staff involved in gritting are physically fit, capable of doing so, and adequately trained in manual handling and other relevant techniques. A level of training can be obtained by completing the manual handling eLearning course accessed via the Astute eLearning platform:
  - LCC Services: <https://lancashire.astute-elearning.com>
  - Schools: <https://lccschools.astute-elearning.com>
- A requirement to regularly check the weather forecast for updates. Information can be accessed via the [Met Office](#) and the [Environment Agency](#).
- Discussion with the workforce regarding any other issues, for example:
  - Reminding staff to ensure that their cars are roadworthy or if a different means of transport may be more appropriate for travelling to and from work.
  - Reminding staff of their own health and safety responsibilities. This can provide reassurance and explain why the risk control procedures are important for the wellbeing of all building users.
- Ensuring any signage required is clearly visible demonstrating cleared routes and areas to be avoided.
- Arrangements for checking the conditions of the cleared paths at appropriate intervals to ensure continued safety (for example, before peak times such as the start and end of the working day).
- Identification of areas that may need to be checked more frequently eg steps, slopes.
- Consideration of, and arrangements for, persons with particular needs, such as the disabled, elderly or children.

Premises managers must communicate the outcomes from the risk assessment, including any control measures, to all relevant persons such as staff, building users and those with specific responsibilities eg for clearing snow or gritting. The control measures must be regularly monitored to ensure they are being adequately carried out and are working effectively.

One control measure for snow/ice is to introduce a gritting plan. An example of a gritting plan is available on the [schools portal](#) or [Intranet](#). There is also an example letter that can be adapted to send to parents, carers or building users explaining the winter gritting arrangements for periods of snow or ice. This can be accessed on the [schools portal](#) or [Intranet](#).

Fundamentally the same process should be followed when dealing with all other severe weather conditions, as identified previously.

Links to further useful information can be accessed at the end of this guidance.

## **Part B - Guidance for employees**

### **What health effects/safety issues are associated with severe weather conditions?**

#### **1. Who is at risk?**

Adverse weather conditions can affect all persons within the establishment whether they are Lancashire County Council employees, students or visitors. However, some groups of people may be more vulnerable to the risks attributed to adverse weather conditions including children, pregnant women and disabled persons.

#### **2. What is the risk?**

##### **Snow/Ice:**

*Slips and Trips:* Staff, pupils, service users etc should be advised to wear appropriate footwear ie with a good grip and no heels. The premises manager will make every effort to ensure the essential areas within the site boundaries are cleared and/or gritted where possible and that these routes are adequately signed.

*Manual Handling Injuries:* Anyone involved in clearing the ice or snow and gritting must be trained and competent in manual handling techniques and be supplied with appropriate PPE if necessary.

*Risks associated with transport:* Those commuting to the school/establishment, such as pupils, staff, or service users, must take responsibility for their own safety and wellbeing on the journey to and from work or school. However, if travelling by car they should be reminded to ensure that it is roadworthy and allow sufficient time for the commute, considering alternative modes of transport if applicable.

##### **Heat:**

*Dehydration:* If insufficient fluids are taken dehydration can be suffered in times of excessive heat. Drinking water should be available for all employees, visitors and general building users.

*Sunburn:* Staff, pupils, service users, etc working or playing outside the premises or involved in outdoor activities should use high factor sun cream and apply it frequently to help prevent sunburn. This is a life skill that children should learn.

**Heat stroke:** In order to prevent heat stroke individuals should wear a hat and take regular breaks in shaded areas.

**High winds:**

**Falls from height:** During periods of high winds, working at height outside should be prohibited to eliminate the potential risk of falls from height.

**Hit by object:** Wherever possible, any lightweight external items including bins should be secured to help minimise the occurrence of flying debris that may result in an injury.

**Floods/heavy rainfall:**

**Slips:** The potential for slips increases as water can be carried into buildings on shoes, etc. To minimise the risk follow the appropriate control measures identified in the emergency plan or risk assessment for severe weather, such as wiping feet on absorbent mats at entrance points.

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## Part C – Legislation and useful links

### 1. Legislation

- Regulation 12 of The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 requires employers to ensure that the “surface of every traffic route in the workplace” is suitable for the purpose for which it is used and to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that surfaces are not slippery and do not have any substance(s) on them that may expose employees to an increased risk of slipping.
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984 place a responsibility on the employer, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that means of access and egress from premises are maintained in a condition that is safe and without risk to either employees or any other persons that may be affected.
- Other regulations that apply are
  - Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992 (as amended)
  - Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended)

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### 3. Useful links

- [LCC winter in Lancashire site](#) (includes advice on driving in winter and gritting information)
- [Snow code \(gov.uk advice on clearing snow from a road, path or cycleway\)](#)
- [Meteorological Office – Weather forecast](#)
- [Environment Agency – Flood information](#)
- [Cancer Research internet guidance on sun safety](#)
- [HSE publication - Keep your top on – health risks from working in the sun](#)