

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL

**EMPLOYEES GUIDE TO
ADVERSE WEATHER
CONDITIONS**

Applies to: All School based Teaching Staff and Instructors

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Adverse weather conditions can sometimes make travel to or from work difficult or dangerous. This guide advises what your responsibilities are as an employee in the event of adverse weather conditions or the non-availability of public transport.

2 SCOPE OF POLICY

2.1 This policy applies to all School-based Teaching staff.

3 EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 Your Responsibility for Personal Safety

It is your responsibility as an individual to consider your personal safety and whether a journey is practical. You should take account of advice or warnings issued by the Council or Police as well as checking weather forecasts and actual weather conditions before making a decision to travel. Several sources of information are available – see Section 10.

If you are unable to attend work, you must report this fact, and the reasons, to your Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity. Guidelines on travelling to work by vehicle in adverse weather conditions are attached to this policy as an appendix.

3.2 Your Responsibility to Attend Work

You are expected to make all efforts to reach your usual place of work and continue with work as normally as possible provided you can do so safely without putting yourself or others at risk.

4 NON-ATTENDANCE AT WORK

4.1 If adverse weather conditions or transport difficulties can reasonably be anticipated, then it is your responsibility to consider what options are available to you in order to minimize disruption at your work. You can then work from home.

For teaching staff, guidance here is established by national agreement and is contained in the SNCT Handbook of Conditions of Service Part 2 section 3.7 “All tasks which do not require the teacher to be on the

school premises can be carried out at a time and place of the teacher's choosing: teachers will notify the appropriate manager of their intention in this respect."

4.2 Notification

You should contact your Head Teacher and let them know if and when you will be able to attend work, taking into consideration any Police warnings and weather forecasts. On return to work, you must inform your Head Teacher of your arrival.

4.3 Essential members of staff

If during a long period of adverse weather your attendance at work is considered essential, your Head Teacher may have to consider arranging alternative accommodation or transport to and from your place of work.

5 REPORTING LATE FOR WORK

- 5.1 If you attend work after your normal start time you must confirm to your Head Teacher the reason for your late arrival. Where your late arrival can be anticipated you should contact your Head Teacher and let them know when you will be able to attend work, taking into consideration any Police warnings and weather forecasts.

6 LEAVING EARLY FROM WORK

- 6.1 If you wish to leave work early due to adverse weather conditions you must seek permission from your Head Teacher.

7 COUNCIL DECLARES CLOSURE OR EARLY FINISH

- 7.1 In exceptional circumstances your place of work may be declared closed, when this happens you will be considered to have been available for duty and will be paid in line with this.

As it is sometimes the case that road conditions vary in different parts of Shetland, the Head of Schools has devolved to Head Teachers responsibility for closing a school to pupils only.

- 7.2 Procedures for blanket closures of all educational establishments are outlined in Appendix 2 – Information Sheet on School closures due to severe weather.

8 NON-AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- 8.1 Your responsibilities to report to work in the event of non-availability of public transport remain the same as in adverse weather conditions. You should therefore follow the guidance set out in Section 4 – Non-attendance at work.
- 8.2 You should contact bus operators directly to find out if bus services are to continue as normal. Similarly, you should contact the Ferry Information Voice Bank to find out if ferry services are to continue as normal.

9 EMPLOYEE STRANDED WHILE ON COUNCIL BUSINESS

- 9.1 If you should become stranded while on Council business because of adverse weather or the non-availability of public transport, the Council will reimburse any actual necessary expenditure incurred where subsistence allowances do not apply.

10 INFORMATION SOURCES

10.1 Recommended sources for information include:

- **Roads, Department of Infrastructure**

Telephone: 01595 744866

During Periods of heavy snow, the Roads Service will endeavor to have staff available from 0700 to provide information about road conditions.

- **Roads, On-line Weather Centre**

Available through SIC Intranet, updated hourly.

Only provides information on actual conditions (air and road surface temperatures, wind speed and direction) - not weather forecasts.

- **Ferry Information Voice Bank:**

Bluemull Sound Services	01595 743971
Bressay Service	01595 743974
Fair Isle Service	01595 743978
Foula Service	01595 743976
Papa Stour Service	01595 743977
Skerries Service	01595 743975
Whalsay Service	01595 743973
Yell Service	01595 743972

- **Radio Stations:**

Radio Scotland, 92-95 fm/810 mw

Radio Shetland, 92-95 fm/810 mw, 1730 - 1800, Mon-Fri

Radio Orkney, 92-95 fm/810 mw, 0730 - 0800 and 1245 - 1300, Mon – Fri

SIBC, 96.2fm, weather every half hour between 0600 – 0900 and every hour between 0900 and 1300.

- **Websites:**

www.northisles-weather.co.uk/

www.bbc.co.uk/weather/

www.meto.gov.uk/weather/europe/uk/nwscotland/

www.onlineweather.com

Please be aware that during extreme adverse weather, the Roads Service may e-mail 'All Council Staff' directly, to provide information, for example if snow plough convoys have been arranged for traffic leaving Lerwick. As weather conditions can change so quickly, the Roads Service cannot accept responsibility for road conditions actually encountered. Individual Services should pass on any relevant information to employees who do not have access to e-mail.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 It is important that all employees know what to do when there is disruption due to adverse weather. Employees must make the final decision whether it is safe to travel and then take every precaution regarding their own safety.

WINTER DRIVING IN SHETLAND

What the Council Does During Winter:

1. Salting or gritting for ice and light snow conditions will start at 6am and continue until 6pm daily.
2. The order of priority for treatment will be main routes, bus and school bus routes and thereafter other routes.
3. Treatment on Sundays and Public Holidays is restricted to the main routes only.
4. No treatment is proposed for Christmas or New Year's days.

What Drivers Should Do:

1. Keep your vehicle fully serviced in good condition with sufficient fuel for your journey bearing in mind fuel consumption may be increased in adverse conditions. Consideration should be given to fitting winter tyres to vehicles likely to be used in winter conditions on secondary and minor roads or on any road outwith working hours.
2. Check your tyres regularly and keep washer bottles topped up with windscreen solution.
3. Clear windscreen and windows before starting any journey.
4. Remember:
 - Look out for ice. Black roads do not mean ice-free roads. Winter can be very variable and it is easy to be caught out by sudden changes. Black ice can be a particular danger; it is not readily visible and can persist or recur even after the road surface has been treated with salt.
 - Dawn frosts also catch drivers unaware. At first light a clear sky will allow heat to radiate quickly from the road surface causing icy patches to form on wet or damp roads.
 - Slushy roads are slippery roads.

In Difficult Conditions:

1. Do not travel unless it is absolutely necessary.
2. If you must travel always let someone know of your destination and expected time of arrival.
3. Be prepared for winter conditions – wear or have with you warm and waterproof clothing and suitable footwear. Carry something to eat and drink and keep a shovel and a torch in your vehicle.
4. If you are caught in a snowdrift, don't leave the vehicle unless you are in sight of a suitable destination – let help come to you. Do not keep your engine running for warmth as there is a danger of carbon monoxide entering your vehicle.
5. If you must abandon your vehicle, try to leave it out of the path of snow ploughs and advise the Police.
6. Drivers traveling in the evening, overnight or early morning or on Christmas Day or New Year's Day in winter conditions should exercise great care for their own safety and the safety of others, in the knowledge that salting, gritting or snow clearing operations are not normally carried out during those times.
7. If you must drive in difficult winter conditions and require a road condition report, telephone either Roads Service on (01595) 744866 or the Police on their non-emergency number - 101.

Information Sheet on School Closures due to Severe Weather

Sometimes, in periods of severe weather, decisions have to be taken to close schools to ensure the safety of pupils. Listed below are detailed procedures for school closures by the three different routes used.

1. If a Head Teacher, acting in response to local conditions and advice, decides that his/her school will not open for pupils or should close before the normal school closing time, procedures for the notification of staff, transport operators and parents should be followed and the Head Teacher must inform the Schools Service, Hayfield House and the Roads Service of the decision. Schools are advised to regularly review their procedures relating to school closures and provide the appropriate Quality Improvement Officer with a copy of the communication tree being used.
2. When the Head of Schools takes a decision before 7.00 am to close all schools for pupils on that day, she will contact SIBC and Radio Orkney. SIBC have guaranteed to broadcast closure information every 15 minutes. She will also contact the two Quality Improvement Managers who will then be responsible for contacting the Head Teachers of all secondary schools, Janet Courtney Hall of Residence, Psychological Service and Additional Support Team (see Appendix A). The Head Teachers of the secondary schools will be responsible for informing the Head Teachers/Managers of all cluster establishments, including primary schools and partner providers (see Appendix B). Head Teachers of all schools should then inform, as appropriate, all staff, transport operators and parents, of the closure decision.
3. When the Head of Schools decides in the afternoon that all schools should be closed for pupils on the following day, she will inform Radio Shetland and SIBC, and set in motion the communication tree.

When all schools are closed for pupils following a decision by the Head of Schools, Shetland College will make their own decision.

Where, in exceptional circumstances a school is closed because of adverse weather, staff are not required to report for duty. If the school in which a teacher is employed is open, but because of severe weather the teacher is unable to reach that school, in accordance with the SNCT Handbook, the teacher can work from home.

Information on school closures will also be given to Radio Shetland for the 12.54 pm daily broadcast.

When a decision to close a school is made, pupils' parents or emergency contact persons must be advised when they can expect children to return home remembering it is the parents' responsibility to arrange for children to be met at all times.

Parents are responsible at all times for deciding whether to send their children to school if it is open for pupils. In the event of a school transport vehicle being caught in a snowstorm, no school child should be allowed to leave the vehicle until handed over to a responsible adult.