

Working Safely in Cold Weather

Advice to employers

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has stated that employers must be flexible during harsh weather conditions, such as ice and snow, and should not force employees to work. When the weather takes a turn for the worst it can result in colleges/schools across Britain closing, leaving many parents with child care issues. In such severe weather conditions, buses and trains can be cancelled and motorists are often warned only to make essential journeys. In such circumstances, many staff may be unable to get to work or choose to work from home (if they can). Whilst many people may not be able to travel; the business does not have to stop entirely in these situations. With good business continuity and safety policies in place, together with a good communication system companies can continue to move forward.

Business owners have many things to consider including safety within the workplace, minimum temperatures and certain arrangements need to be in place if the workplace does need to close, business continuity, the safety of employees and ensuring communication is still effective. These points are featured in more detail below. It may be necessary to make fast decisions about closing the workplace or sending employees home. These should be made considering risks and hazards, likelihood and severity ensuring safety as far as is reasonably foreseen. Company owners may wish to make decisions in conjunction with your health and safety advisers, employee representatives and facilities manager.

Advice to those with responsibility for health and safety

At times of extreme weather, communication must be retained throughout the organisation. Employees must be instructed as to what employer's policy is, how to follow it and who to speak to with if they have any queries.

Safety in the workplace

With fewer people in the workplace, lone working situations may arise and it should be ensured that communication is maintained with any staff in this situation and that non-essential high-risk tasks are avoided. Consideration

should also be given to vulnerable workers such as disabled employees or pregnant staff.

Assessing the risk

It must be made clear who takes the ultimate decision in times of terrible weather, in terms of when staff should leave the workplace or if a workplace should close for an amount of time. The five stages of risk assessment should be applied, as always, and a decision made by a competent key person.

Trips, slips and falls

Walking to and from car parks or between company buildings at work during this weather requires additional attention to avoid slipping and falling. Slips and falls are some of the most frequent types of injuries during these colder winter months. Staff should be reminded to avoid boots or shoes with smooth soles and heels, such as plastic and leather soles and instead, wear a pair of well-insulated boots with good rubber treads and to walk slowly and with shorter steps when on icy surfaces. Main pathways and steps should be cleared as far as possible of snow and ice to allow safe access to the buildings. Staff should be reminded to remove as much snow and water from their boots as they can when entering buildings as water from melting ice on the floor can also lead to slippery conditions.

PPE

If outdoor working is required, ensure that suitable and sufficient PPE is provided, including suitable gloves. Systems of work for outdoor activities should take account of reasonably foreseeable poor weather.

So, for all your PPE requirements speak to the team at PPE Stores on 0115 952 3096 or email sales@ppestores.com