

## **Storm Éowyn**

### **Adverse Weather Preparation Guide**

Met Éireann has issued a Status Red warning for the entire country for tomorrow, 24<sup>th</sup> January due to Storm Éowyn which is forecast to bring gale to storm force southerly winds becoming westerly with extreme, damaging and destructive gusts in excess of 130km/h

Impacts:

- Danger to life
- Extremely dangerous travelling conditions
- Unsafe working conditions
- Disruption and cancellations to transport
- Many fallen trees
- Significant and widespread power outages
- Impacts to communications networks
- Cancellation of events
- Structural damage
- Wave overtopping
- Coastal flooding in low-lying and exposed areas

The warning will be in effect from 02.00 – 14.00 (depending on county – check [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie) for details). The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has issued guidance for operators of construction sites. For temporary structures, operators are being advised to anchor scaffolding, tie down materials and equipment and to secure fencing and hoarding. They are also being urged to check whether any frame or structure is “at risk of collapse due to wind load”.

Regarding pay for employees whose attendance at work is affected by Storm Éowyn, you will find up to date advice from the Workplace relations Commission [HERE](#). In general, there is no statutory entitlement for an employee to be paid if they cannot attend work because of extreme weather. Any more beneficial arrangement is a matter for agreement between the employer and the employee, and we advise employers to exercise discretion in the best interests of employees and the business in this area.

SME recommends that all businesses and employers take a proactive approach to minimise the disruption due to this warning, or should there be another extreme weather event this spring. This means putting contingency plans in place, advising employees of what will happen in the event of a Red Weather Alert and ensuring there is sufficient planning to offset any potential loss.

#### **Contingency Planning**

It is important to consider how a severe weather incident will impact your business:

- Is your premises prepared for the impact of severe winds?
  - Do access points require additional support? (Grit / Salt / etc.)
  - Are waste water drains cleared?
  - Is there damage that requires repair on the roof or external walls?
  - Is there adequate insulation on the locations plumbing?
- Are you adequately insured to cover potential loss associated to weather damage?
- What local agencies are in a position to support you should your business require support?
- Consider how a business decision will be made as to whether or not closure is necessary. Who will make the decision and more importantly, how will this decision be communicated to employees?
- Are the contact details for all of your employees up to date?
- Can employees be issued with equipment that facilitates remote working from home?
- How will the company respond with regard to payment in the event of a closure?
- Where there is no closure:
  - What support will be offered to employees to deal with the conditions?
  - Has the company conducted a Risk Assessment based on the activities of the team members that are affected by the decision to remain open?
  - Have the employees been briefed, and where necessary trained, on the findings of the Risk Assessment?

Employers have a duty of care for all employees under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, and must give due consideration if it is safe to ask employees to travel to work, or to undertake their work.

It is imperative that an appropriate Risk Assessment is conducted to ensure that management makes an informed decision and that no employee's safety is put at risk unnecessarily.

### **Preparing Employees**

In the event of a closure will the company:

- How will the company communicate the situation and any updates to employees?
- Payment:
  - Allow employees to work from home - where possible?
  - Continue to pay the employee as normal or put the employee on short term lay off (contract permitting)?
  - Provide them with the option of taking a day's annual leave to cover their absence?
  - Allow the employee to make up any missed time at a later date?

- What supports can be offered to employees adversely effected by a closure?

Flexibility should be allowed for employees, especially those who have some distance to travel.

Where employees are present in the workplace, care should be taken to remain vigilant for any worsening conditions and cancelled/amended travel services. Consideration should also be given to how long it will take employees to commute to and from work safely.

### **Customers and Suppliers**

- How will they be impacted by a closure and how will it be communicated?
- How will the company be impacted if there is a drop in sales?
  - Is there a contingency fund in place to account for a drop in sales?
  - Has the company considered customer safety on the premises?
- How will the supply chain be impacted?
  - Will the company have enough stock if a supplier is forced to close?
  - How long will it take to reestablish supply?

### **Conclusion**

ISME recommends that an appropriate person is designated within the company to develop a contingency plan to ensure that there is no delay in implementing agreed actions when required.

Remember, there is no way to account for Mother Nature, however with the right planning you can limit the amount of impact to your company, employees and customers.

For more support contact ISME Members Services on 01-6622755