

BE WINTER-READY



Helping make you, your home and your business more resilient and prepared for severe weather



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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Developed by the **Office of Emergency Planning** in association with the following organisations:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Department of Defence

Department of Education and Skills

Department of Health

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Department of the Taoiseach

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

An Garda Síochána

Bus Éireann

Defence Forces

Electricity Supply Board

Health and Safety Authority

Health Service Executive

Irish Coast Guard

Irish Water

Met Éireann

National Disability Authority

Office of Public Works

Road Safety Authority

Teagasc

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Notes



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INTRODUCTION

We hope that this revised edition of our Winter Ready Booklet will assist households in preparing for severe weather and coping with it when it actually happens.

Remember that everyday tasks which we take for granted become more difficult or even hazardous in severe weather, yet by taking some simple steps you can reduce the impact of such events.

During periods of severe weather, it is important to obtain the latest information, by listening to the weather information and weather warnings from Met Éireann, usually delivered during the weather forecast. Information will also be available during severe weather on the Twitter page of the Office of Emergency Planning @emergencyIE and Met Éireann.

We have also included contact details for organisations and agencies that can provide further guidance and assistance.

We encourage everyone to keep an eye on older neighbours and relatives during periods of severe weather. They will inevitably have more difficulty than usual in getting about, to buy food and medical supplies and to attend their medical appointments. Remember that they may not have access to the latest information from the internet and social media, so they will really benefit from ongoing personal contact.

The booklet is published by the Office of Emergency Planning, on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.

We have a lot more information and useful links on our website, www.winterready.ie

Tá leagan Gaeilge den leabhrán seo ar fáil freisin.

Our main message is simple, - Be Prepared, Stay Safe and know where to find help should you need it.



To be **Winter Ready**, you need to be aware of the weather conditions in your area, so that you can **PREPARE**

Met Éireann weather forecasts are available on RTÉ (radio and TV), on many of the independent local and national radio stations and on www.met.ie.

When a Weather Warning (level orange) or a Severe Weather Warning (level red) is in operation it will also be issued to the broadcast media and to local authorities.

Weather Warnings are presented in three categories:

STATUS YELLOW Weather Alert - Be Aware

The concept behind YELLOW level weather alerts is to notify those who are at risk because of their location and/or activity, and to allow them to take preventative action. It is implicit that YELLOW level weather alerts are for weather conditions that do not pose an immediate threat to the general population, but only to those exposed to risk by nature of their location and/or activity.

STATUS ORANGE Weather Warning - Be Prepared

This category of ORANGE level weather warnings is for weather conditions which have the capacity to impact significantly on people in the affected areas. The issue of an Orange level weather warning implies that all recipients in the affected areas should prepare themselves in an appropriate way for the anticipated conditions.

STATUS RED

Severe Weather Warning - Take Action

The issue of RED level severe weather warnings should be a comparatively rare event and implies that recipients take action to protect themselves and/or their properties; this could be by moving their families out of the danger zone temporarily, by staying indoors or by other specific actions aimed at mitigating the effects of the weather conditions.

You can get more details on Met Éireann's weather alert, weather warning and severe weather warning on www.met.ie which also has the latest national and regional forecasts.



Remember

During severe weather, stay well back from exposed coastal areas (e.g. coastal cliffs, piers and beaches, etc.) and do not put yourself in a dangerous position near breaking waves.



The HOME in Winter

Be Prepared

- Have a small supply of non perishable, easy-to-prepare foods
- Keep extra supplies of essential medication in case it is difficult to get to the doctor/pharmacy
- Have an adequate supply of fuel for heating/cooking and if possible a suitable alternative should the main supply fail
- Have batteries for torches in the event of power cuts
- Have candles and matches. Candles should always be placed away from draughts in proper candleholders. Never leave a burning candle unattended
- Have a water container to ensure a supply of drinking water
- Know how to turn off your water supply
- Keep mobile phones charged up - have local emergency numbers in your phone
- Have a suitable snow shovel (but any shovel or spade will do)



Are you ready for snow and freezing conditions?

- Snow clearing is strenuous—do not attempt it unless you have a reasonable standard of fitness and do not have an underlying medical condition. Wear suitable clothing and boots or shoes with a good grip
- Clear the snow earlier in the day - do not use boiling water as it will freeze over and cause a hazard

Be Prepared – prevent your water supply freezing up

- Mains water supply to premises, i.e. external stopcock - the depth from ground-level to the stopcock should not be less than 600mm. If required, seek professional advice on having the stopcock lowered or protected. The same applies to the line from the stopcock to your property. Be aware that the level may vary as it nears



your property

- If you have a meter installed by Irish Water, a frost plug has been inserted in the meter boundary box to prevent the meter and stopcock from freezing
- If no meter is installed by Irish Water, to prevent stopcocks freezing, open the stopcock chamber and remove any water. Fill the chamber with non-absorbent material to provide insulation e.g. expanding foam. Do not use absorbent material as it too will freeze when wet
- Do not leave taps running as this merely wastes a valuable resource and you will incur additional costs if you are on metered water charges. More information at www.water.ie
- If you are leaving your property unattended for a period of more than a day or two, you should shut off the water supply to the property from the external stopcock (while ensuring that any water-dependent appliances or facilities are also shut-off)

Be Prepared - avoid Frozen Pipes

Ensure all exposed pipes are adequately insulated. This includes pipes in the attic even where the attic floor has been well insulated

- Insulate around an outside tap
- Leave a light on in the attic
- Open attic trap door to allow heat in
- Leave heating on for longer periods at lower settings
- Warmth offers the best protection against frozen pipes so keep your house warm



Frozen mains water supply

- If your supply is frozen, be cautious with the use of heating systems, washing machines or other water-dependent appliances or facilities
- If in doubt, contact a qualified plumber for advice

Water Leaks

- Water supply in vacant premises and holiday homes should be shut off and drained down in preparation for winter
- Keyholders - check premises regularly for possible leaks
- If a leak is detected:
 - * Turn off water supply –stop valve is usually under the kitchen sink
 - * Turn on cold taps to drain the system
 - * Turn off central heating
 - * Turn off electricity supply at main fuse board if leak is near electrical appliances
 - * Call a qualified plumber and/or electrician





Advice for Older People and their Families and Neighbours

In winter it can be difficult for everyone to get about and conduct day to day activities. It is even more difficult for older and other vulnerable people.

Advice for older people or infirm

Keeping Well and Warm

- Keep warm, eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need. Keep active indoors
- Have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in your home
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list beside your phone

Personal Safety – Staying Safe

- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking outside during the cold weather
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall

- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you visit your doctor for a check up

Fall prevention in your home

- Leave a low energy light on at night time, preferably one with a high light output
- Use a non-slip shower or bath mat
- Make sure wires or cords from lamps, telephones etc. do not trail where you walk
- Arrange furniture so that you can easily move around all your rooms
- Remove rugs or use non-slip tape or backing so rugs will not slip
- Consider installing hand rails on both sides of the stairs



Keep safe this winter – for more information visit www.hse.ie

Keeping an eye on older people and infirm

Try to call on older relatives and neighbours, and offer to assist them in severe weather.

- Ensure that they have sufficient supplies of food and medications
- Ensure that they have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in their homes
- If you have any doubts about the safety of an older or infirm person seek the assistance of the Garda Síochána or local social services



People with Disabilities



Keeping Well and Warm:

- If your disability is affected by a drop in temperature try and be aware of the weather forecast in order to allow you plan for pain management
- Wear the correct amount of layers to try and maintain your body temperature at the required level
- Individuals with reduced mobility should take extra measures to protect their hands, feet and other areas of the body that are particularly subject to cold
- Eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need. If you have some mobility try and keep active indoors
- Have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in your home
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list or saved onto your phone
- If you cannot talk to people on the phone, make sure you have a relative or friend you can text for assistance if you need it, and register with the emergency services so you can contact them via text if necessary.
- If you have to use medical equipment or a powered mobility device every day please make sure that you always have access to a power supply

- Ensure that you are on the vulnerable customer registers for the energy companies and Irish Water
- If you have an assistance dog, be sure to keep them warm as well. Be sure to always have a blanket for the animal to rest on. Keep the animal indoors as much as possible

Personal Safety – Staying Safe:

- Plan for the possibility that winter weather may disrupt your homecare service
- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking outside during the cold weather
- If you use a mobility device make sure it can grip an icy surface
- If you have a ramp make sure it is well gritted in icy weather
- If you have a mobile phone that you can use make sure it has a charge and bring it with you when you are going out
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall
- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you can visit your doctor for a check up



Keeping an eye on people with disabilities

- If possible, make yourself aware of a relative or neighbour's disability and ask them how best you can help them if required
- Try to call on relatives and neighbours who have a disability, and offer to assist them in severe weather
- Ensure that they have sufficient supplies of food and medications
- Ensure that they have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in their homes
- Ensure that they have access to power and water
- Try to arrange regular visits or phone calls so they don't feel isolated
- If you have any doubts about the safety of someone you know who has a disability seek the assistance of An Garda Síochána or local health and social services





Flooding

In the event of a flood, the local authorities and emergency services will provide the principal response at a local level. **ALWAYS cooperate with their instructions.**

Individuals and communities also play an important role in reducing the impact of floods by being aware of flood risks and potential impacts and by being prepared to take action if and when a flood occurs.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) has a dedicated awareness website www.flooding.ie for homes, businesses and farms. This website provides practical information and guidance on being prepared to take action if and when a flood occurs. The OPW has also prepared a handy booklet called "Plan, Prepare, Protect" that is available to view online or download.

Advance planning

Find out if you live in an area at risk of flooding by:

Speaking to neighbours and your local authority

Consulting the OPW flood maps, which show areas that may be at risk of flooding (See www.floodmaps.ie).

If you DO live in an area at risk of flooding, you can greatly lessen the impact of a flood by taking the time to **prepare in advance:**

- Make a flood plan for your family or business so that everyone knows what to do and where to go in case of a flood
- Make up a flood kit and ensure everyone knows where to find it
- Check if you have flood insurance and consider if there are any physical improvements to your property that you could make to reduce the likelihood of flood damage

Be Prepared

A typical **flood plan** for your home should include:

- Emergency numbers – have a print-out and store electronically on your phone
- List of most valuable possessions – know where they are so you can move them quickly to safety
- Store valuable documents in a watertight container – passports, birth certificates, insurance policy, etc.
- Gas and electricity – know where the shut off points are
- Have a prearranged place that you can safely move your car to if you have time
- Have medication to hand (if needed)



A **flood kit** should include a torch, some warm and waterproof clothes, a battery or wind-up radio, a mobile phone, rubber gloves, rubber boots, a first aid kit, blankets and children's essentials, if required.

Practice your flood plan. Ensure that everyone knows what has to be done and what is safe to do.



A Flood Event

You should check local news and weather forecasts and heed all weather warnings issued. Be prepared to put into action any plans you have made to deal with flooding in your area including:

Inside and Outside

- Turn off gas and electricity

- Move valuables and other items to safety above the flood level or upstairs if possible
- Disconnect washing machines and dishwashers
- Put sandbags (or other suitable flood resistant barriers) at any openings where the water could enter your house
- Move vehicles to high ground if possible
- Remember, floodwater could get into your garage – keep any chemicals or fuel in watertight containers and if possible move to above flood level to ensure that they do not spill into the flood water and cause an additional hazard
- Close off the flow valves on propane tanks, oil drums, or other fuel containers that supply your home through pipes and fittings
- Unplug any exterior electrical connections such as outdoor lighting, pond pumps and filters, if safe to do so
- Move livestock and pets to a safe location
- Note the location of any manholes or service chambers and keep clear of these during a flood, as their covers may be dislodged

Evacuation

Despite all precautions, it may still be necessary to evacuate your home or business.

ALWAYS cooperate with instructions from emergency services and local authorities.

After a Flood

- Always be careful when re-entering your property after a flood as there may be structural damage or contamination as a result of floodwater.
- The Health Service Executive provides health advice for flood events at www.hse.ie.
- Have any electric, gas or fuel-based service checked by a professional before re-entry following a flood.
- Record any damage caused (photo and video) and check with your insurance company as to what may be covered by your policy.
- See www.flooding.ie for further advice.

Flooding - General Safety Advice

- If possible avoid contact with floodwater as it may be contaminated or polluted, for example with sewage
- Don't try to walk, cycle or drive through floodwater
- If you have to leave your vehicle, be wary of strong currents and debris
- Take care if you have to walk through shallow water – manhole covers may have come off and there may be other underwater hazards that you cannot see
- Never try to swim through fast-flowing water – you may get swept away or struck by an object in the water
- Keep away from sea and flood defences and fast moving water
- Owners of high axle vehicles such as trucks or tractors might be asked for help in getting through flooded areas



Remember

150mm (6 inches) of flowing water can sweep you off your feet and 600mm (2 feet) of water can float your car.







Road safety

Is Your Vehicle Winter-Ready?

You should get your car serviced before winter sets in to make sure it is ready for the conditions which will undoubtedly arrive when least expected! There are some things you can do yourself:

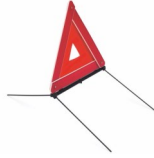


- Lights - Make sure all your indicators and headlamps are clean and working
- Liquids - Make sure the water reservoir is up to the maximum mark and correctly mixed with anti-freeze. You may also need to top up your coolant and screen wash
- Oil - Check your dipstick and top up the oil if necessary. Look for signs of leakages on the ground under the car
- Electrics - Check your dashboard before and after starting the engine. Listen for a weak battery and replace if necessary
- Windscreen wipers - you should clean them regularly and replace them every 12 months
- Tyres - Check your tyre treads and pressure, including the spare. While the minimum legal limit is 1.6mm, a minimum tread of 3mm is advised for winter driving
- Safety Assist - Check your vehicle's owner's manual and find out if it has any safety assist technology e.g. ABS



Be Prepared - Emergency equipment to have in your car

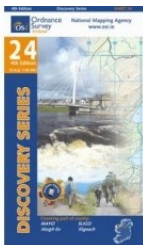
- High Visibility Vest
- A hazard warning triangle
- A torch with batteries - check it monthly



- Tow rope
- A shovel
- Jump Leads
- A Fuel Canister
- Spare fuses and bulbs



- De-icing equipment (Both for glass and door locks)
- First aid kit
- A Map or GPS (Charged)





- Appropriate clothing and footwear in case you have to leave your vehicle
- Have a charged mobile phone
- Some simple supplies to sustain yourself (drink and food)



Planning a journey in winter

Do you really have to travel by car? You could:

- Consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve
- Use public transport where available

If you really have to travel by road, be prepared for severe conditions

- Ensure your vehicle has a more than adequate supply of fuel for the journey. If possible keep your fuel tank full in winter.
- Check your emergency equipment.
- Allow extra time and drive with caution. Let someone know your route and when you expect to arrive.



- Check to see if there are any problems on your intended route before you leave. Information is available from Transport Infrastructure Ireland, website www.tiitraffic.ie and you can follow them on Twitter @TIITraffic.
- You could also check the AA Roadwatch website www.aaroadwatch.ie or follow them on Twitter @aaroadwatch. Listen to TV or radio bulletins and check the weather forecast. Remember that the best road conditions are likely to occur between 10am and 4pm.
- If you do not know your route, and are using SatNav/GPS, be sure it does not bring you over a dangerous route, such as across mountainous terrain or along narrow back-roads, which may be hazardous due to snow and ice. e.g. Sally Gap, Co Wicklow or Barnesmore Gap, Co Donegal. Do not rely totally on a SatNav/GPS, look at your route on a map.
- More detailed advice on using the roads in Severe Weather can be found on the Road Safety Authority website www.rsa.ie/Road-Safety/





Driving in hazardous conditions

Remember the following serious hazards:

- Snow and ice will always be worse in mountainous areas and higher ground – try to route around such places. There is information about road conditions and road temperatures on www.tittraffic.ie/weather/
- Beware of high sided vehicles in strong winds, particularly when overtaking. If you are driving a high sided vehicle try to anticipate exposed sections of roadway where winds will be stronger
- Beware of fallen trees or other debris
- Leaving your vehicle is dangerous, wear a high visibility jacket and use your hazard lights to enable other traffic to avoid collision with your vehicle. However, on a motorway, it is safer to get out of your car and stand behind the safety barrier. Call for assistance immediately

Health Preparedness for Older People



Colds and Flu are caused by viruses, so they can't be treated with antibiotics and an antibiotic in this situation may do more harm than good.

Colds

Symptoms of a cold include sore throat, sneezing, blocked or runny nose, cough and feeling unwell. While symptomatic with a cold you should drink plenty of liquids, get lots of rest at home and eat healthily. Most adults will start to feel better after 3 or 4 days and be fully recovered by 7 days, although young children may take a little longer to fully recover.

Flu

Influenza or Flu is a virus that comes on suddenly and makes you feel quite unwell. Symptoms of Flu include sore throat, fever and muscle aches which develop quickly, along with feeling very unwell. You should start to feel much better after 5 to 8 days although a cough and general tiredness may last for 2 to 3 weeks.

Usually you do not need to see the doctor, as most Flu can be treated at home by drinking plenty of liquids, getting lots of rest and eating healthily. Contact your GP by telephone if you don't improve or if you start to improve and then get worse.

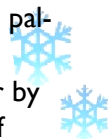
People with Flu are usually infectious a day before symptoms start and remain infectious for 5 or 6 days. Stay at home and try to avoid all unnecessary contact with others during this time to avoid spreading the illness to them.

Discourage any visitors. You can avoid spreading the Flu germs by coughing and sneezing into a tissue, binning the tissue immediately and washing your hands with soap and water afterwards. Alcohol based hand gels are also effective. If you don't have a tissue you can cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow.

Those at risk of complications of Flu include:

- Those 65 years and older
- Children under 2 years of age
- Pregnancy including up to 2 weeks after delivery
- Residents of nursing homes and other residential care facilities
- Those with chronic illness, immunosuppression, morbid obesity, cerebral palsy and intellectual disability or Down Syndrome

If you are in one of these at risk categories you should contact your doctor by telephone, as you may need special anti-viral medicines. These work best if started within 48 hours of onset of Flu symptoms.



Keeping Well and Warm:

- Keep warm, eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need.
- Keep active indoors
- Have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in your home
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list or saved onto your phone



Personal Safety – Staying Safe:

- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking outside during the cold weather
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall
- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you visit your doctor for a check up



You, Your Farm and the Winter

Stay Safe

Farming is always a dangerous occupation and it is even more so when severe weather arrives.

Now is the time to PLAN in order to minimise the effects of severe weather on your farm and your family.

Look after your Personal Safety

- Before going out on your land always tell someone where you are going, and how long you will be gone for
- Wear suitable layers of clothing
- Carry a charged mobile phone and a torch
- Never use a stand-by generator indoors, as fumes from the engine can be lethal
- Be sure that equipment (for example a chainsaw) which you may not have used for some time is fully serviceable and that you use it correctly. See www.hsa.ie for more detail

Cold Weather and Snow

- Plan how you will get food and water to your stock
- Prevent your machinery and water supplies freezing up:
 - * Have thermostatically controlled heaters in the pump house
 - * An insulation blanket/plastic sheet placed at the entrance to the milking parlour may help prevent milking machines freezing up
 - * Drain wash-down pumps
- Check the antifreeze levels in all your engines
- Have a plan to clear routes around your farm buildings, and a stock of gritting material and salt
- When searching for animals in snow, wear high-visibility clothing so you can be easily seen





Looking After Livestock

- Do a fodder budget in spring to establish feed requirements for next winter
- Build in a reserve of 1-2 bales per head, particularly on heavy land types
- Maximise grass growth during the main growing season to build a reserve of winter feed
- Get your silage analysed. Meal supplementation rates must be based on silage quality
- Have grit and salt available to ensure access to sheds in the event of snow or icy conditions
- Have a plan to deal with a power outage

You can get more information from:

Animal Welfare Helpline: 0761-064408 and 01-6072379

Flooding on the Farm

Read the flooding section of this booklet carefully. Get more information from the website www.flooding.ie

If your farm is in an area at risk of flooding:

- Move your livestock to areas you can access if flooding risk is high
- Carefully assess the depth of floods before driving through them
- Only use suitable vehicles if you have to drive through floods
- Secure valuable equipment and fuel supplies in suitable locations so that they are not ruined by water





Other Hazards

Be careful when using equipment which you may not have used for some time:

- Be sure that it has been serviced properly and is in good working order
- Do not “Risk It” - if you do not really know how to use the equipment get someone to advise you or find out how to use it
- Particular care is needed while using chainsaws - see the booklet “Safe Working with Timber and Chainsaws” on the HSA website www.hsa.ie

Electricity

Get a copy of the booklet “Farm Well...Farm Safely” from the ESB Networks website www.esb.ie - it tells you all you need to know about using electric equipment on your farm.

- Stand-by generators. Special regulations apply to the connection and use of generators
- The connection must be installed by a qualified electrician
- ESB must be notified of proposed operation of a generator
- Incorrect connection can cause a ‘back-feed’ posing a risk to yourself, other consumers and maintenance staff



Business Sector

Preparing Your Business for Severe Weather



Every business has a number of challenges to overcome to ensure business continuity in the event of severe weather. Preparation is key to minimising disruption during such events.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Forfás have prepared a practical checklist for the business sector which will outline key issues to address as part of business continuity planning for, and in response to, severe weather events. The checklist is available in the document Business Continuity Planning in Severe Weather at www.forfas.ie and www.dbei.gov.ie.



Practical considerations on how a severe weather event can affect operations include:

Impact on Place of Business Consider how various severe weather scenarios can affect the place of work i.e. the site and buildings.

- Is the location or access to it at risk of flooding? Read the flooding section of this booklet carefully. Get more information from the

website www.flooding.ie

- Are access points liable to difficulties e.g. access roads positioned on a slope at risk of ice?
- Are water pipes insulated (including in and around vacant buildings)?
- Ensure that the business has information and contact details regarding key services including local authorities
- Review insurance cover and contact insurance advisors in relation to any concern a business may have

Impact on Employees

- Consider the potential impact as a result of employees being unable to attend the place of work
- Consider how alternative work practices could minimise disruption e.g. teleworking, shift-work and consider how the Human Resource Management practices in the business can cater for disruption
- Consider what additional measures need to be taken to ensure employees can work safely, while at work



- Ensure the business has up-to-date employee contact details and a communications plan
- Ensure that management responsibility is clearly assigned for planning and making preparations; identify business critical roles and develop plans for ensuring continuity

Impact on Customers

- Consider how customers may be impacted upon
- Consider the business impact as a result of lower custom
- Consider alternative means to serving customers and what strategies can be employed to minimise disruption e.g. online commerce
- Have in place a communications plan for customers
- Consider how customer safety can be assured within the public areas of the business
- Assess how surrounding pavements and access points can be cleared in the event of snow and ice and make preparations for suitable equipment being available



Impact on Suppliers

- Consider the impact of a disruption to supplies and review stockpiles
- Liaise with key suppliers and assess their preparedness in the event of severe weather affecting their businesses
- Consider especially time-sensitive supplies
- Consider alternative transportation routes and logistics channels
- Consider safety of suppliers of goods and services, which may entail access to less frequented areas of premises





Schools and Severe Weather

Schools and Severe Weather

The following is provided as guidance for school management.

Be prepared Be informed Be vigilant

Preparation

Schools should conduct a pre-event evaluation of what should be, or could be, in place to ensure the opening of the school in the event of severe weather. Areas for consideration are maintenance of school premises and utilities, salting and gritting and transport to and from school. Access in the school to a battery operated radio and flashlights should be put in place.

Schools should ensure that every member of staff is clear as to their role and responsibilities during severe weather including in the event of a school closure. A member of staff should be assigned to monitor weather conditions and to contact the principal response agencies and school transport services where required.

Included in the school's plan for severe weather should be the proposed responses and roles which will apply in the event of a Red level weather warning from Met Éireann.

Communications

Schools should ensure to have the relevant contact details of the principal response agencies for their area, including An Garda Síochána, fire brigade and local authorities and other appropriate services. Schools should also have contact details for the transport services serving their school. These details should be checked regularly and kept up-to-date.

Schools should establish communications with neighbouring schools to ensure, as far as practicable, a unified local response to severe weather events may be implemented. It is noted however that while schools in an area may try to co-ordinate their decisions, the circumstances can vary between individual schools in close proximity and may on occasions lead to different decisions being taken by schools.



Most schools use a text messaging service to communicate with parents and staff. Local radio, the school's website or social media may also be useful to alert parents and students to school conditions and closure should this arise.



State Examinations

In the event of severe weather during scheduled state examinations the State Examinations Commission will communicate with schools to put in place alternative arrangements.

Closing a School

The decision to close a school rests with the school management authority taking into consideration the full guidance and direction available from the principal response agencies, especially An Garda Síochána. Any decision to close is taken in the interest of child safety, having assessed the local risks and having consulted, as appropriate, with school transport operators.



Some of the issues that schools take into account include:

- conditions in the school itself
- the capacity of the school to ensure the health and safety of students whilst in school
- the ability of parents, students, staff and school transport services to safely negotiate local road conditions to reach the school
- guidance and direction from the principal response agencies

Guidance on time lost due to unforeseen closures as a result of severe weather is set out in circular 16/2014 which is available on the Department's website www.education.ie.

Weather Warnings from Met Éireann

Schools should monitor weather forecasts in order to be prepared for any severe weather which may affect the school. During periods of severe weather schools should assess the situation using the above guidance. Schools should be prepared, keep themselves informed and remain vigilant.

In recent years Met Éireann has introduced colour coded weather warnings as follows:

- Status Yellow – be aware
- Status Orange – be prepared
- Status Red – take action

Schools should respond appropriately to such warnings using the above guidance.

It should be borne in mind that there may also be weather events which may be fast moving with little warning. For example, consider the case of Storm Darwin in February 2014 where Met Éireann had issued a Status Red alert for the Cork and Kerry regions; however, on that occasion the weather moved rapidly across the southern half of the country affecting a number of other counties.

There may also be Status Orange weather warnings that may require action to be taken because of the particular local circumstances, e.g. in areas at risk of flooding or areas located on the coast. Any assessment taken by the school for actions necessary should be guided by local knowledge and experience and by way of advice from the principal response agencies.

Status Red Weather Warning

All weather warnings of Status Red will require some action on behalf of schools. Schools need to assess the potential impact of such weather events taking account of past experiences and in light of advice on the current event from the principal response agencies in their area.

A Status Red weather warning for heavy rain may be particularly relevant if the local area is at risk of flooding. A Status Red warning related to ice or snow which may compact may cause local issues due to the location of the school and/or the routes taken to reach the school.

Status Red Weather Warning for Wind

Schools should note in particular Status Red weather warnings where strong winds or storm conditions are forecasted. Due to the high degree of unpredictability as to the impact of the weather associated with such a Status Red warning on local conditions schools should use the following guidance to assist them in making their assessment.

Status Red weather warning for wind related conditions may be given in advance of a school opening or it may arise during the day while a school is underway.

Advance Warning of Status Red

Following consultation at a national level with the Office of Emergency Planning and the management bodies for schools, the Department of Education and Skills' advice to schools is that they should consider not opening where a Status Red weather warning related to wind is forecast to coincide with the period/s during which students and staff would be expected to be travelling to and from school.

Whether the school should open later in the day where an improvement to the weather is forecast is a decision which should be taken in consultation with An Garda Síochána, the local authorities, school transport services and other appropriate agencies based in the school's area.

Warning of Status Red that arises during the school day

Where the Status Red weather warning related to wind is issued when the school is already underway with students and staff present, the school management should immediately contact An Garda Síochána, the school transport services and other appropriate agencies for advice on whether it may be safe to undertake journeys from the school or when such journeys should commence. Consideration should also be taken as to the safety of parents undertaking journeys to the school to collect children.

Where a decision may have to be taken on health and safety grounds based on the advice available to the school for students and staff to remain on the school premises during a Status Red warning related to wind, then schools should plan for such an eventuality by considering how students and staff can be accommodated within the school while awaiting an improvement in the weather. Such decisions should be taken based on the health and safety of all concerned taking account of the prevailing and forecast weather conditions in the vicinity of the school.





Contact Information

Emergency Services

If you have an emergency please phone the emergency services at

112 or 999

In the event of any emergency on water, including offshore, along the coastline, on inland waterways, lakes or rivers call **112 or 999 and ask for the Coast Guard.**

Remember to have phone numbers for your doctor, chemist, children's schools, local authority, Garda station, service providers and family members conveniently to hand so that you can locate them easily should an emergency arise.

Services

ESB Networks	LoCall 1850 372 999
Gas Networks Ireland	LoCall 1850 20 50 50
Irish Water	LoCall 1890 278 278

Weather Forecast

You can obtain the latest weather forecast from the following sources:

Visit the homepage of Met Éireann website: www.met.ie

Listen to national and local radio hourly news bulletins

Watch weather reports after TV news bulletins (Aertel pages 160 - 163)

To see a five-day forecast from Met Éireann

Met Éireann website: www.met.ie/forecasts/5day-ireland.asp

To see the Rainfall radar from Met Éireann

Met Éireann website: www.met.ie/latest/rainfall_radar.asp

HSE Map Centre

The Health Service Executive has a facility on the homepage of its website www.hse.ie called Map Centre. You can use this facility to locate health services in your area. Just enter your address and choose an option to find your nearest hospital, pharmacy, doctor, Garda station, nursing home or dentist. Directions are provided from your home to the required service.

Transport

The website www.dttas.ie provides links to all public transport providers. During Severe Weather disruption, the individual transport provider sites are updated on a continuous basis.

The following are contact details for Public Transport providers. You should also keep to hand contact information for your local private transport operators.

Bus

Dublin Bus Routes – Customer Service Number - (01) 8734222

Twitter: @dublinbusnews Facebook: /dublinbusnews

Bus Éireann Intercity/Commuter Bus Services

Twitter: @buseireann Facebook: /buseireann

Bus Éireann Travel Centres

Ballina	(096) 71800
Cavan	(049) 4331353
Cork	(021) 4508188
Drogheda	(041) 9835023
Dublin	(01) 8366111
Dundalk	(042) 9334075

Galway	(091) 562000
Killarney	(064) 6630011
Letterkenny	(074) 9121309
Limerick	(061) 313333
Monaghan	(047) 82377
Sligo	(071) 9160066
Stranorlar	(074) 9131008
Tralee	(066) 7164700
Waterford	(051) 879000

Bus Éireann School Transport Offices

For Services in Counties	Contact Office	Phone Numbers
Westmeath, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Laois	Athlone	(090) 6473277
Mayo	Ballina	(096) 71816
Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Meath	Dublin	(01) 8302222
Louth, Monaghan, Cavan	Dundalk	(042) 9355069 (042) 9355065
Clare, Limerick	Limerick	(061) 217484
Galway	Galway	(091) 537694 (091) 537512
Sligo, Leitrim	Sligo	(071) 9160440
Donegal	Stranorlar	(074) 9131008
Waterford, Tipperary South, Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford	Waterford	(051) 873401
Kerry	Tralee	(066) 7164750
Tipperary	Tipperary	(076) 106 5000

Rail

Iarnrod Éireann incl Intercity/Dart/Commuter Rail – Customer Service Number – 1850 366 222

Twitter:@irishrail **Facebook:** /iarnrodeireann

Luas Services – Customer Service Number – 1800 300 604

Twitter:@luas **Facebook:** /luas

Air

For Arrivals/Departure Information is available at the airport websites:

www.dublinairport.com, www.corkairport.com, www.shannonairport.ie

See: **Aertel** pages 571 - 576

Twitter: @daa, @corkairport, @dublinairport, @shannonairport

Airport	Website	Phone Numbers
Dublin Airport	www.dublinairport.com	(01) 8141111
Cork Airport	www.corkairport.com	(021) 4313131
Shannon Airport	www.shannonairport.com	(061) 712000
Ireland West Airport Knock	www.irelandwestairport.com	(094) 9368100
Waterford Airport	www.flywaterford.com	(051) 846600
Kerry Airport	www.kerryairport.com	(066) 9764644
Sligo Airport	www.sligoairport.com	(071) 9168280
Donegal Airport	www.donegalairport.ie	(074) 9548284
Aer Arann Islands	www.aerarannislands.ie	(091) 593034
Belfast International Airport	www.belfastairport.com	+44 (0) 28 9448 4848
George Best Belfast City Airport	www.belfastcityairport.com	+44 (0) 28 9093 9093
City of Derry Airport	www.cityofderryairport.com	+44 (0) 28 7181 0784

Sea

For Arrivals/Departure Information visit the following websites:

Ferry Service	Website	Phone Numbers
Irish Ferries	www.irishferries.com	0818 300 400
StenaLine	www.stenaline.ie	(01) 2047777
P&O Ferries	www.poferries.com	(01) 6869467
Brittany Ferries	www.brittanyferries.ie	(021) 4277801

City and County Councils

Council	Website	Phone Numbers	
		Office Hours	Out of Office Hours
Carlow Co.	www.carlow.ie	(059) 917 0300	(059) 917 0300
Cavan Co.	www.cavancoco.ie	(049) 437 8300	(049) 437 8300
Clare Co.	www.clarecoco.ie	(065) 682 1616	087 416 9496
Cork Co.	www.corkcoco.ie	(021) 427 6891	(021) 480 0048
Cork City	www.corkcity.ie	(021) 492 4000	(021) 496 6512
Donegal Co.	www.donegal.ie	(074) 915 3900	Water: 1850 278 278 Roads: (074) 917 2288
Dublin City	www.dublincity.ie	(01) 222 2222	(01) 679 6186
Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown Co.	www.dlrcoco.ie	(01) 205 4700	(01) 677 8844
Fingal Co.	www.fingalcoco.ie	(01) 890 5000	(01) 890 5000
Galway Co.	www.galway.ie	(091) 509 000	(091) 506 000
Galway City	www.galwaycity.ie	(091) 536 400	(091) 536 400
Kerry Co.	www.kerrycoco.ie	(066) 718 3500	(066) 718 3500
Kildare Co.	www.kildare.ie/countycouncil	(045) 980 200	1890 50 03 33
Kilkenny Co.	www.kilkennycoco.ie	(056) 779 4000	1890 252 654

City and County Councils

Council	Website	Phone Numbers	
		Office Hours	Out of Office Hours
Laois Co.	www.laois.ie	(057) 866 4000	(057) 866 4000
Leitrim Co.	www.leitrimcoco.ie	(071) 962 0005	(071) 962 0005
Limerick City&Co.	www.limerick.ie	(061) 496 000	(061) 417 833
Longford Co.	www.longfordcoco.ie	(043) 334 3300	1850 211 525
Louth Co.	www.louthcoco.ie	(042) 933 4549	1890 202 203
Mayo Co.	www.mayococo.ie	(094) 902 4444	(094) 903 4706
Meath Co.	www.meath.ie	(046) 909 7000	1890 445 335
Monaghan Co.	www.monaghan.ie	(047) 30 500	Monaghan: 087 650 1833 Carrickmacross / Castleblayney: 087 687 3154 Ballybay / Clones: 087 204 1672 Monaghan Town: 087 242 4222
Offaly Co.	www.offaly.ie	(057) 934 6800	1890 750 750
Roscommon Co.	www.roscommoncoco.ie	(090) 663 7100	(090) 663 7100
Sligo Co.	www.sligococo.ie	(071) 911 1111	(071) 911 1111
South Dublin Co.	www.sdcc.ie	(01) 414 9000	(01) 457 4907
Tipperary Co.	www.tipperarycoco.ie	0761 06 50 00	Roads / Housing: 1890 923948 Water: 1890 278 278
Waterford City&Co.	www.waterfordcouncil.ie	0761 10 20 20	0761 10 20 20
Westmeath Co.	www.westmeathcoco.ie	(044) 933 2000	(044) 933 2000
Wexford Co.	www.wexfordcoco.ie	(053) 919 6000	1890 666 777
Wicklow Co.	www.wicklow.ie	(0404) 20 100	(01) 291 6117

Important Phone Numbers

Doctor		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Veterinary Surgeon		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Dentist		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Neighbour		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Other Emergency Contact		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
School		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
School		
[Name]	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Garda Síochána	999 or 112	[Alternative Phone]
Fire/Ambulance Service/ Coast Guard	999 or 112	[Alternative Phone]
Service Providers		
Gas	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Electric	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
Water	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]
County Council	[Phone]	[Alternative Phone]

Notes



Notes



Notes



Be Winter-Ready Booklet

The booklet can be downloaded from the website www.winterready.ie or by writing to The Office of Emergency Planning, National Emergency Co-Ordination Centre, Agriculture House (2 East), Kildare Street, Dublin 2

An Irish language version is also available. Copies are available by contacting the Office of Emergency Planning

The contents of these pages are provided as an information guide only. They are intended to enhance public access to information for preparing and dealing with severe weather events. While every effort is made in preparing material for publication no responsibility is accepted by or on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning or the Office of Emergency Planning for any errors, omissions or misleading statements on these pages or any site to which these pages connect.

www.winterready.ie



[@emergencyIE](https://twitter.com/emergencyIE)

LoCall: 1890 252 736 or 0761 001 608

e-mail: oepe@defence.ie

