



Health & Safety Standard Procedure

Dealing with snow and icy conditions in Eko Trust schools

November 2017

Introduction

When snow or icy roads are forecast then certain measures should be taken in advance to minimise the potential hazards that may be presented. Now weather forecasters and local authorities work very closely together to ensure that roads are treated prior to ice and snowfall as driving can be very difficult and dangerous in these conditions.

When temperatures fall to sub-zero there is also an increased risk to vulnerable people.

The attached updated guidance, which includes an example risk assessment, provides some practical solutions and advice to head teachers and premises managers to make informed decisions on this matter. In addition, these recommendations can also form part of any statutory risk assessment undertaken by head teachers as part of their emergency/critical incidence planning and can therefore be included with the school emergency plan.

Who is governed by this Standard Procedure?

All Eko Trust Schools

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Action

- Read the attached document.
- Prepare a written plan to use when snow, ice and frost is forecast using the attached example risk assessment and checklist. (Paragraph 1 and 2, Appendix 1 and 2)
- Ensure the plan is communicated to staff. (Paragraph 2)
- Ensure that arrangements are in place to clear snow and ice from key access and egress points of the school. (Paragraph 2 and 3).
- Ensure there is a sufficient supply of salt/grit stored in your school. (Paragraph 5)
- Ensure that those clearing snow and ice have and are wearing suitable clothing and working in safe conditions (Paragraph 6 and 7)
- Prior to closing a school ensure that NPW is consulted (Paragraph 8)
- If the school has to close due to severe weather ensure that parents, staff and pupils are kept informed during the closure period. (Paragraph 8)
- Ensure that you consider the implications of a significant snowfall during the school day and check weather forecasts (Paragraph 9 and 10)
- Ensure pupil absence is recorded in accordance with the DfE guidance. (Paragraph 11)

Establishment Action

Date Received:
Planned Action:

Action to be taken by:
Date to be completed by:

DEALING WITH SNOW AND ICY CONDITIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Health and Safety legislation and other Acts of Parliament require employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe access to, and exit from, premises. This guidance provides some practical solutions and advice to assist head teachers and heads of establishments in maintaining safety during frosty, icy and snowy weather.

In addition, these recommendations can also form part of any statutory risk assessment undertaken by managers in their area of responsibility.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 General

Head Teachers should identify which staff may have a problem attending work to ensure that appropriate supervision levels can be maintained and the school can remain open to deliver the curriculum.

An assessment should be made as to whether pupils should remain inside during lunch/break periods. If they remain within the building, they should be provided with access to indoor activities where required. If pupils continue to use outside areas a risk assessment must be undertaken. Likely control measures may be to increase the level of supervision and to introduce rules for snow play.

The checklist (Appendix 1) and the example risk assessment attached (Appendix 2) will assist head teachers with producing their own, site specific risk assessment that will ensure necessary plans and arrangements are in place.

2.2 Non-PFI Eko Trust Schools

Head Teachers must ensure there are arrangements in place for clearing snow, ice and the spreading of salt/grit during adverse weather conditions.

The Head Teacher would normally delegate the responsibility for arranging for clearing snow, ice and salting and gritting to the premises staff who should determine how site resources are best used and prioritise areas for snow and ice clearance and the application of salt/grit.

If the school or establishment is used by a number of different services or by different services at different times of day, there must be clear arrangements in place to ensure that the responsibility for clearing snow, ice and for salting and gritting is clearly set out and drawn to the attention of all those involved.

All users of the site should be aware of these procedures, which should be communicated effectively by displaying appropriate information in the staff room and issuing reminders during staff meetings and in staff bulletins especially during winter months.

Details must be drawn to the attention of all employees working on the premises so they are aware of the safest ways of entering and leaving the premises and temporary signs indicating safe routes of access and egress displayed where appropriate.

2.3 Eko Trust Schools with PFI providers

2.3.1 PFI provider responsibility

Schools with PFI providers have different contractual conditions dependent on the service provider. Generally, the PFI provider is responsible for the following:-

- Monitoring weather reports and forecasts
- Ensuring that grit is spread on all roads, car parks and walkways overnight (within the site boundary) whenever there is a risk of surface ice or snow
- In the event of snow, ensuring safe access is provided along all access roads and pathways and to car parks and hard play areas prior to the start of the school day
- To commence clearing snow from paths and commence gritting car parks, paths and hard landscaping (within site boundary), within 1 hour of report received in school hours regarding snow and ice issued by the Metrological Office.

Providers cannot be liable for unavailability deductions in relation to outdoor areas (including sports pitches) where the lack of safety is due to inclement weather. However experience has shown providers have been willing to clear external areas e.g. playgrounds, sports pitches, etc. as a good will gesture.

2.3.2 School responsibility

The school must report to the relevant Help Desk, complaints, service failures, unavailability of areas of the school, and other issues in order to commence rectification and create an audit trail etc.

3. CLEARANCE PRIORITIES AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

The priority will be to clear snow and apply salt/grit to the main access pathway(s). The person responsible will need to use discretion in determining other priority areas such as footpaths, on-site roads, car or vehicle parking areas and other areas pupils, staff and visitors may need to use.

Snow and ice clearing duties should, as far as possible, be counted as part of normal working hours of premises staff, and as such, other non-essential duties may have to be rescheduled.

A simple plan of the building should be drawn up showing the paths or other hard areas that will or may need to be cleared and monitored. This plan should be kept in a "Snow and Ice" folder along with details of staff responsible, written instructions, inspection log, location of tools equipment, details of suppliers of salt and grit, etc. Ensure that any external companies delivering goods to the school are able to gain reasonable access.

If there is early warning of snow or icy conditions, Head Teachers may wish to consider arranging for priority areas to be salted and gritted in advance, for example, during the previous evening or afternoon. Arrangements should be made for access routes to be inspected regularly following the salting and gritting to monitor its effectiveness. It is recommended this is undertaken before the end of each session.

Inspections should be undertaken at the start of the day, before lunch and before the end of the working day. Results of such inspections must be recorded and additional clearing salting and gritting required undertaken prior to staff and pupils leaving the building to minimise the risk of incidents.

4. THE AREA SURROUNDING THE SCHOOL

Areas outside schools are a priority above general pavements, but not as great as those outside health and emergency facilities.

Insurers have confirmed that a school is in no part liable for accidents that happen outside the school site outside the school day.

It is the responsibility of staff, pupils and their parents to ensure their safety in coming to and going from the school site. Any claim would be against the relevant council as the owner of the highways but it should not be assumed that any such claim would succeed. Head teachers should not include this issue in weighing up the health and safety considerations of meeting the legal obligation to be open on school days.

5. SUPPLY AND STORAGE OF SALT AND GRIT

In the interests of safety it is advised that salt/grit is the most effective and economical method of over-coming slippery conditions.

The Head Teacher should make arrangements via the premises staff to ensure that a sufficient /supply of salt and grit is available for use by designated staff at the start of the cold season. Supplies should be ordered well in advance of adverse weather conditions.

In the past, there have been instances of pupils in a primary school picking some crystalline salt granules off the playground and tasting them, thinking they were snow or ice particles. Head teachers must therefore warn pupils, where this is foreseeable, and where the risks cannot be adequately controlled. Head Teachers may consider purchasing a salt/grit mixture rather than pure crystalline salt for treating icy surfaces or to mix salt with sand and grit before application.

An appropriate container, for example, a salt/grit bin, will enable a reasonable amount of salt and grit to be kept on site ready for use. The container also overcomes the problem of finding a suitable storage space for this bulky and occasionally used commodity. If a salt grit bin is not available then it must be stored in a secure dry place.

6. CLOTHING

Suitable warm and weatherproof clothing should be provided for staff who will be working outside as part of their normal duties.

Where practicable, all staff and pupils should be reminded to wear appropriate warm and windproof clothing and non-slip footwear when coming to school in severe weather conditions, as it will seldom be possible to clear all snow and ice from a site. In particular, walking from a parked car to the nearest access path may be hazardous.

If necessary, the uniform should be changed to allow for appropriate footwear to be worn whilst pupils are outside or travelling to and from school.

Staff travelling to school by car should be advised to take sensible precautions to keep a blanket, mobile phone, shovel, warm drinks and other sustenance, etc. in their vehicles in the event of a breakdown on their way to and from work.

7. VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

Those undertaking snow and ice clearance need to be aware of possible traffic movements in their immediate vicinity and should be able to take evasive action in the event of that a car or other vehicle loses control on a slippery surface. All staff should, when clearing snow and ice, face oncoming traffic, wear high visibility clothing, for example reflective jackets, tabards, bands, etc. They must not cover their ears completely with ear muffs, hats, etc. and should when appropriate look and listen for traffic and have an escape route planned.

Signs warning drivers of that snow and ice clearance is being undertaken should be displayed when appropriate. These may include a speed limit.

8. SCHOOL CLOSURE IN SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Head Teachers/Heads of Establishments should draw up plans, as part of the emergency/critical incidence procedures for the premises, of the action to be taken in the event of immediate or predicted severe weather, for example, deep snow or severe cold.

If the head teacher makes a decision to close the school it should be on the basis that it is expected staff and pupils will be subject to a risk that cannot be reduced to an acceptable level. The decision would normally be considered as a last resort and made at the appropriate time. Past severe weather warnings did not deliver the level of snow forecasted and chaos predicted did not materialise. As a result some schools were closed unnecessarily.

The DfE, in February 2013, acknowledged schools play a key role in their local communities and by staying open help both their pupils and parents. In making your decision you must therefore take a common sense approach whether to close or remain open in bad weather. Head teachers will have to balance the risks arising from less supervision, reduced curriculum, late return journeys, minor slips and bumps, etc. against disruption to pupils' learning, the impact a closure would have on the local community and whether pupils are safer in school than out.

NPW must be advised of the intention to close the school and you must consider informing neighbouring schools. NPW will discuss school closures with the Head Teachers and provide appropriate support and advice.

Parents and outside organisations, including the media, expect up to date information on closures and re-openings to be on school websites. If the school closes at any time during the day there must be a system to inform parents and manage how those pupils will be adequately supervised until their parents are able to collect them. (this could be at the end of the normal school day). Relying on one system, e.g. texting will not be perfect, so the school websites are a good back up.

If there is a chance that the school will be closed the following day, then there must be a system of notifying parents. This could include sending a letter/slip out with pupils at the end of the day or leaving an answer phone message at the school informing parents of the school's decision.

9. SNOWFALL DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

If a significant fall of snow commences during a school day, you need to assess the extent to which leaving the school site safely will become increasingly difficult for pupils and staff. This may lead you to judging that there is a point where, if the snow is expected to continue to the normal going home time, it would be safer to release the pupils immediately, provided that they can be collected or return home unaccompanied in accordance with your usual policy on this aspect.

10. WEATHER FORECASTS

A forecast for severe weather or snow is only that and it may or may not actually happen. Therefore, it is right to be prepared for a heavy snowfall, but not right to act on the assumption that it will actually occur, unless the forecast is unequivocal. It is therefore, important to check the weather forecasts frequently.

11. ATTENDANCE STATISTICS

Head teachers should not be worried about the impact that remaining open may have on their attendance statistics. In September 2010 the DfE amended the relevant regulations so that, when a pupil cannot get in because of severe weather, the school can use attendance code Y, which means that the pupil's absence will not affect the attendance statistics. If the head teacher believes that a child could have got to school, then the child should be recorded as code O for unauthorised absence.

Reference:

Met Office www.metoffice.gov.uk

HM Preparing for Emergencies www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk

BBC Weatherwise www.bbc.co.uk/weather/weatherwise

Department for Education (DfE)

www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather

Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk .

CHECKLIST FOR HEAD TEACHERS

	CHECK	YES/NO
1	Is the school Critical Incident Team formed so that it can meet?	
2	Has a risk assessment been completed?	
3	Is there a written plan (including a site plan) in place to ensure that ice and snow are cleared from key areas and salting and gritting is effective as possible?	
4	Has the plan been communicated to all staff?	
5	Have appropriate staff been delegated and instructed to undertake the clearance of snow and ice at appropriate times?	
6	Are the areas to be cleared identified and prioritised?	
7	Does the establishment have an adequate supply of salt/grit available, suitably stored and appropriate tools (e.g. Spades, shovels, brushes, etc.?)	
8	Do the responsible persons have appropriate warm and protective clothing and non-slip footwear for the job?	
9	Are arrangements in place to ensure that staff, pupils and visitors are made aware of the routes for safe access to and exit from the establishment?	
10	Is a follow up inspection arranged?	
11	Are the results of such inspections recorded?	
12	Have staff and pupils been informed of appropriate clothing for the weather conditions?	
13	Is the weather forecast being regularly checked?	
14	Have pupil absences been recorded correctly?	



EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR DEALING WITH ICE AND SNOW

EMPLOYER:	Eko Trust
SCHOOL	
TASK	
DATE:	
ASSESSED BY:	
JOB TITLE:	
AGREED BY: (HEAD TEACHER)	

Hazard Description	Persons Affected	Risk Consequence (resulting harm)	Current Controls	Severe 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Risk Rating L,M,H
<p>School uniform policy to be relaxed?</p> <p>Staff reminded to have arrangements in place in the event of a vehicle breakdown.</p>						
<p><u>Vehicle traffic in the car park</u></p> <p>High-visibility clothing has been provided to site management staff who undertake gritting.</p>						
<p><u>School Closure</u></p> <p>All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that the school remains open. However, the head teacher is clear they have the ultimate decision whether to close the school.</p> <p>Impact on local community of school closure considered.</p> <p>NPW informed of closure. Parents informed of closure. School website updated.</p>						
<p><u>Are there any other foreseeable hazards associated with ice/snow?</u> Please circle</p> <p>Yes / No</p>		<p><u>List any risks</u></p>	<p><u>List control measures</u></p>			

Health and Safety Management Action Plan

Name of Person Preparing the Plan:		Date Plan Prepared		
Short-term controls	Long-term controls	Person responsible	Target date	Completion date