


## POLICY DOCUMENT

Policy Title:	Managing Extreme Weather Conditions
Policy Group:	Whole Hospital
Policy Owner:	General Manager
Issue Date:	April 2021
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Next Review Due	April 2023
Author:	
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Evidence:	ACAS
How implementation will be monitored:	Risk Management Reviews
Sanctions to apply for breach:	Not applicable
Computer File Ref.	O: new policy book\ whole organisation
Policy Accepted by MT	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2021
Sign-off by CEO	

### Statement of purpose:

To identify the risks to patients, visitors and employees arising from spells of weather that are potentially harmful directly or indirectly to patients, visitors or staff and to set out plans to minimise and manage the risks in the most effective way.

This Policy sets out the management systems in place to minimise the risks to patients and other users at Holy Cross arising from adverse weather conditions.

### Policy Statement:

Extreme weather conditions such as heavy and prolonged snowfall in winter, exceptionally windy conditions or prolonged heatwave in summer have the potential to harm people in a variety of ways. This policy aims to identify those at risk, describe the allocation of responsibility for managing the risks and the resources available.

### Organisation

#### Responsibilities-

Chief Executive has overall responsibility for implementing the policy, ensuring resources are available to managers, monitoring the implementation of the policy and reporting to Management Team on the need for changes.

HR Manager is responsible for planning and taking action to reduce the likelihood of staff being unable to attend work as a result of severe weather conditions, for co-ordinating staffing arrangements and ensuring the fair application of policies to individual members of staff.

The Clinical Directors are responsible for assessing weather-related risks to patients or others at risk, for directing actions to minimise the risks and reporting to the Chief Executive on any concerns about the efficacy of the arrangements.

Ward Sisters and Night Sister or deputies are responsible for monitoring the well-being of patients and staff working in their areas and reporting to the Clinical Directors

General Manager is responsible for reviewing forecasts to assess the risk of hazardous conditions, for putting all in the organisation on alert if the risk is identified, for co-ordinating action by non-clinical staff to reduce risks to a minimum.

## **Procedures**

### **Management of Risks arising from storm conditions**

1. Preparation for storm conditions (combining high winds and heavy rain lasting several hours)

Storms and high winds, whether or not accompanied by heavy rainfall, can cause damage to buildings. Such weather conditions can develop rapidly often without adequate warning. To avoid damage to buildings and to ensure that essential services are maintained the following maintenance and management plans are in place

- Drains and gulleys are regularly inspected and cleared
- A regular audit of the trees that could cause damage to persons or buildings is undertaken and remedial action is taken in a timely manner to remove any trees that are assessed to be likely to cause damage or harm
- The backup generator will provide power should weather conditions cause power outages
- The heating plant is regularly inspected and maintained.
- Doors and windows are inspected regularly to ensure that they are in full working order
- A regular external condition survey is undertaken by a Consultant and external remedial work is planned to ensure that the buildings remain in good repair
- Roofs are subject to regular visual inspection by caretaker
- Wheeled bins are stored in a compound so that they do not present a risk in high winds.

### **Management of Risks arising from Severe Cold Weather Conditions**

The location of Holy Cross is such that adverse weather can cause some disruption to services. The local area is prone to disruption in electrical supply, heavy snow fall is not uncommon and some outlying areas are prone to flooding.

2. Health and Safety

The health and safety of all persons on the site is the paramount consideration in planning to deal with severe winter weather. The particular hazards are considered to be

1. Hypothermia as a result of being outside and exposed to cold and wind and heavy rain
2. Hypothermia as a result of being inactive in under-heated rooms
3. Slips on ice and snow
4. Vehicle accidents as a result of skids on ice and snow
5. Damage to Buildings or vehicles or injury to staff by falling branches in high winds
6. Water Damage caused by high levels of rain fall

Indirect consequences include

1. Exhaustion as a result of working excessive hours at times when the hospital is short-staffed
2. Heightened risk of breakdown in other safety measures as a result of unusual staffing arrangements.

3. Delays in securing attendance of emergency services
4. Disruption of major utilities, delivery of supplies and removal of waste

It is the responsibility of managers in the Hospital to plan work to minimise the risks arising from these hazards. All employees have a responsibility to take every care of their own and other people's safety in all aspects of work, including travel to and from work.

### 3. Preparation for severe cold weather conditions

Storms, high winds or heavy and prolonged snow fall can cause damage to buildings. Severe weather conditions can develop rapidly often without adequate warning. To avoid damage to buildings and to ensure that essential services are maintained the following maintenance and management plans are in place

- Drains and gulleys are regularly inspected and cleared
- A regular audit of the trees that could cause damage to persons or buildings is undertaken and remedial action is taken in a timely manner to remove any trees that are assessed to be likely to cause damage or harm
- The backup generator will provide power should weather conditions cause power outages
- The heating plant is regularly inspected and maintained.
- Doors and windows are inspected regularly to ensure that they are in full working order
- A regular external condition survey is undertaken by a Consultant and external remedial work is planned to ensure that the buildings remain in good repair
- Roofs are subject to regular visual inspection by caretaker
- Wheeled bins are stored in a compound so that they do not present a risk in high winds.

In addition to ensuring that the building is maintained in a good condition at all times additional plans are made to cope with the effects of severe winter weather. The General Manager is responsible for consulting and planning with Support Services.

The preparation will include:

1. By mid-November, ensuring that all equipment including tractor, Snow plough, salt spreader and hand tools are in good serviceable order
2. Checking supplies of road salt and diesel used
3. Preparing to cascade information from Met Office forecasts to all departments.
4. Checking stock levels of critical supplies to ensure they are maintained at pre-determined levels. Minimum order for diesel is 500 litres.
5. Ensuring that rooms are prepared in the Staff Accommodation in readiness for use by non-resident staff.

### 4. Workforce Co-ordination

The Human Resources Department, together with senior staff, is responsible for monitoring the effect of severe weather on the availability of the workforce and to make plans on a day-to-day basis to ensure adequate staffing to meet the basic needs of patients. The Clinical Directors are responsible for assessing the extent to which modifications to the usual routine of work is safe and acceptable in view of the prevailing circumstances.

In particular consideration may be given to

1. Accommodating non-resident staff by day or night if roads are impassable at the end of a particular shift. Any empty rooms will be made up ready for emergency use throughout the winter months. The General Manager will ensure that welfare supplies such as toothpaste, brushes and shower gel are available for staff who stay

on site unexpectedly. In addition to rooms being made up ready a further supply of sleeping bags and additional duvets and pillows will be available should it be necessary for rooms to be shared by day and night staff working opposite shifts.

2. Adjusting working rotas to assist employees to work at times to suit altered travel arrangements.
3. Providing advice to employees who may have difficulty in getting to work by normal means on possible lifts from colleagues travelling in or out from a similar area. (HR Department will update this list at 1st December every year and will ensure that it is available for use by Reception and senior nurses at any time.)

#### 5. Lost time and pay policy

The provisions for dealing with lost time and consequent adjustments to pay are set out in the Staff Handbook (Inclement Weather)

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that:

1. All staff understand what is expected in terms of reporting to work in the event that travel is not possible or delayed
2. Maintaining records of staff working arrangements and for providing information via time sheets to the Payroll Administrator.
3. Reporting to their senior Manager on any situations that threaten to disrupt essential services
4. Reporting to Human Resources Department on any staffing issues that give rise to particular or unusual difficulty.

#### 6. Supplies Contingency Arrangements

With the likelihood of disruption to normal transport arrangements the following arrangements will apply.

1. Fuel – Caretakers will be responsible for assessing the availability of generator and tractor fuel at the end of November and advising the General Manager on the need to increase stocks. They will also monitor usage between November and March to ensure that stocks remain adequate. Alternative suppliers will be identified for use if required.
2. Road salt – Caretakers will be responsible for assessing the supply of road salt at the beginning of November and will advise the General Manager accordingly. They will monitor usage and report on the need to purchase additional supplies once the level drops to less than 4 days' worth for icy conditions (24 sacks) If there is snow forecast the stocks of salt should be increased to 60 bags
  - a. Salt bins around the site should be kept full in readiness from beginning of November
3. Food – The head Chef will monitor advice from suppliers to ensure the availability of supplies.
4. Clinical Supplies – The Nursing Services Manager and General Manager will assess stock levels of essential clinical supplies at any time when severe weather is forecast. Consideration will be given to moderating the rate of usage where this is consistent with good patient care.
5. Medicines and other pharmaceutical supplies will be reviewed to ensure a sensible level of stock is available in addition to named-patient supplies.
6. Oxygen – The Assistant General Manager will review stock levels with the Director of Nursing Services when severe weather is forecast and if necessary temporarily increase the number of cylinders held in reserve.
7. Bed linen – Additional blankets and duvets are available for use by patients and will be made available by the General Manager.
8. Collection of Rubbish-it is likely that in snow conditions the waste contractors will be unable to collect rubbish as normal. If waste exceeds the level that can be stored in

the bins, it should be segregated as normal and carefully stacked so that it is not a hazard to anyone in the area until the normal collection resumes.

## 7. Snow and Ice Clearance

The General Manager and Assistant General Manager will monitor weather forecasts and ensure that there are adequate staff resources available to facilitate a fast response in case of snow and ice. It is desirable that two members of the Caretaking team are on duty for snow and ice clearance.

The Caretakers are responsible for clearance of snow and ice. Their duties include:

1. Organising between them availability to attend site out of normal hours to treat drive and footpaths, doing so when possible before the first snow fall
2. Clearing snow and ice and spreading salt or de-icer
3. Giving general assistance to all persons while outside on hospital property with regards to their safety and welfare during severe weather
4. Co-ordinating the use of any volunteers in assisting with any of the above activities
5. An arrangement is in place with the grounds contractor to provide manpower to assist with the clearance of the drive and pathways between the hours of 6.30am and 10pm. This will be coordinated by the General Manager or Duty Caretaker (appendix 3 gives more detail)

The senior nurse on duty should contact the Caretaker on call as soon as it is noticed that snow is settling. It can become very difficult to clear the drive if a heavy accumulation has built up and vehicles have driven over it. Caretakers are prepared to accept calls at any time of the night.

## 8. Training Arrangements

The attention of all staff will be drawn to the policy annually through the Briefing issued in November.

## Management of Extreme Temperatures (Heatwave)

### 9. Assessment of Risk

Extreme temperatures are dangerous to everyone. The patients at Holy Cross Hospital have difficulty maintaining their body temperature due to the nature of their illness/injury placing them at high risk. In addition, many are unable to express their discomfort making them highly dependent on staff to monitor and identify action to be taken. The risk of seizures is increased with exposure to strong sunlight. During a heat wave, when temperatures remain abnormally high for several days, it can prove fatal. Climate change means that heat waves are likely to become more common in England.

The general risks are:

- a. **Heat exhaustion** is usually one of the first signs that someone is at risk of developing heatstroke. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, muscle weakness or cramps, pale skin, weak pulse and high temperature.
- b. **Heat stroke** can develop if the symptoms of heat exhaustion are left untreated. It can occur suddenly and without warning. Symptoms include confusion and disorientation, convulsions, unconsciousness, racing, thumping pulse, flushed, hot and dry skin and a very sudden rise in temperature. Heatstroke can result in organ failure, brain damage or death.
- c. **Sunburn** can occur in a very short space of time; some medication makes patients even more susceptible.

### **Risk of water usage restrictions being put into place**

The environment agency warns that a hot summer could result in one of the most severe droughts in the past 100 years. In order to manage the use of water effectively local water authorities are able to restrict the usage

There are three levels of restrictions that can come into force

1. Hosepipe ban: This is when the Water Company imposes a ban on domestic use of hosepipes and sprinklers. A hosepipe ban has no effect on the day to day running of the hospital
2. Non-essential use Drought order: The Water Company has to apply to the Government for permission to impose a non-essential use drought order. A number of practices are banned under the order but each individual authority will choose which they will ban. It prevents the use of water for non-essential uses such as washing cars, watering gardens and cleaning windows. This type of restriction would have little effect on the day to day running of the hospital
3. Emergency drought orders: the water authorities would seek approval from the Environment Secretary and in practice this would mean that water supplies to homes would be shut off and stand pipes would be set up. Alternatively, water could be rationed to homes and business by cutting supply at certain times.

If applied in full to the Hospital, these measures would have a severe impact on patient welfare, for instance by hampering the normal arrangements for staff hand-washing. Following consultation with the water supply company, it is considered that the risk of such restrictions being applied to the hospital is low. However, Management would take all reasonable steps to ensure water consumption was kept to the minimum consistent with patient safety and comfort and would consider special measures to minimise all other use.

**Fire risks in the grounds** are greatly increased at times of prolonged dry weather. Material that would easily ignite should not be allowed to accumulate and the woods should be checked for signs of trespass or attempts by others to start fires.

### 10. Resources available to moderate risks arising

The Department of Health has implemented a heat wave plan for England.

([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/429384/Heatwave\\_Main\\_Plan\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/429384/Heatwave_Main_Plan_2015.pdf)) At the core of this plan is a 'heat-health watch' system that operates from 1<sup>st</sup> June until 15<sup>th</sup> September. This system has four levels of response and is based on the threshold day and night-time temperatures as defined by the Met Office the threshold temperature varies by regions and the threshold temperature for South East England is 31°C (day time) 16°C(night-time)

*Level 1 awareness*-this is the minimum state of vigilance. Both before and during this period, preparedness must be enhanced and maintained by measures set out in the heat wave plan. At this level the Department of Health issues general advice to Healthcare professionals, including details of what to do at Levels 2 &3

*Level 2 Alert*-This is triggered as soon as the Met Office forecasts threshold temperatures for at least three days ahead in one region, or that there is an 80% chance of temperatures being high enough on two consecutive days to have significant effects on health. At this level the department of health will make available advice to health care professionals, in affected regions, in preparation for imminent heat wave

*Level 3 Heat Waves*-This is triggered as soon as the Met office confirms that the threshold temperatures have been reached in one region or more.

*Level 4 Emergency*-This is reached when a heat wave is so severe and/or prolonged that the adverse effects extend beyond health and social care. (Power shortages, water shortages or when the integrity of the health and social care system is threatened)

Any information received from the Department of Health will be cascaded down to all staff

## Resources within the Hospital:

- a. Blinds that reduce solar gain have been fitted to all rooms on the front of the hospital building. All other rooms are fitted with lined curtains
- b. All windows can be opened for ventilation
- c. There are two mobile air-conditioning units that can be used throughout the building
- d. Thermometers are available to monitor the temperature
- e. Fans are available for use by all patients
- f. Water and ice is always available and additional cold drinks will be distributed in the event of a heat wave
- g. Air conditioning fitted in Outpatients gym and Inpatients Gym

## 11. Actions to be taken

To keep the hospital as cool as possible:

- a. Curtains and blinds should be kept closed in the morning and afternoon to reduce solar gain in patient rooms
- b. Open windows early in the morning and in the late evening
- c. Monitor temperature inside and outside the building

Monitor patients

- d. Check body temperature and weight regularly
- e. Watch for changes in behaviour
- f. Watch for signs of headache, unusual tiredness, weakness, giddiness, disorientation and sleeping problems

Reduce the risk of heat stroke

- g. Keep patients in the coolest parts of the building
- h. Monitor and increase fluid intake of patients
- i. Encourage staff to drink plenty of water
- j. Encourage staff and patients to avoid drinks containing caffeine or very sweet drinks
- k. Patients to have high factor sun screen applied prior to going outside in sunlight and wear a suitable hat.

## Emergency Treatment

If you suspect someone has heat stroke, call (9) 999. While waiting for the ambulance:

- Take the person's temperature
- If possible, move them to somewhere cooler
- Cool them down as quickly as possible by removing clothing and wrapping them in a damp sheet
- If conscious, encourage them to drink fluids
- Do NOT give aspirin or paracetamol

## 12. Summary of additional responsibilities in case of a Heatwave

**General Manager:** Makes regular checks of the Met Office website to determine current level of alert and inform all staff of any necessary action required. Monitors work of Support services staff and contractors to ensure that the policy is being implemented. Maintains inventory of equipment and reports to the Chief Executive on the need for replacement or additional items and ensures that spare equipment is held in stock and that all equipment is kept in good working order

**Clinical Director(s):** ensures the implementation of the policy with respect to patient care and recommends additional measures to deal with unforeseen needs.

**Ward Sisters:** Ensure that blinds and/or curtains are kept closed when there is direct sun onto them to reduce the build-up of heat in rooms. Ensure that windows and curtains are opened when the outside temperature has dropped to lower than the inside temperature.

### 13. Monitoring arrangements (during times of heat wave only)

Support Services staff will monitor internal and external temperatures and report findings to General Manager.

General Manager and caretaking staff will check on proper use of blinds and fans and ensure availability of chilled water to meet all requirements.

Nursing Services Manager and clinical team will monitor effects of temperature on patients and implement changes to normal routine as needed to mitigate risks.

### 14. Audit Arrangements

The Policy will be reviewed following any instances of prolonged extreme weather conditions and a report on the effectiveness of the policy and procedures will be included in the monthly Health and Safety report

### 15. Training Arrangements

The attention of all staff will be drawn to the policy if relevant weather conditions seem likely.

### 16. Review

This policy has been reviewed for adverse impact on people with protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010 and no such impact was found.

The policy will be reviewed bi- annually to ensure that the system described continues to provide an effective framework for managing services safely during extreme weather events.

## Appendix 1

### Inventory of equipment for keeping cool

Room	Fan √	Room	Fan √
101	√	201	√
102	√	202	√
103	√	203	√
104	√	204	√
105	√	205	√
106	√	206	√
107	√	207	√
108	√	208	√
109	√	209	√
110	√	210	√
111	√	211	√
112	√	212	√
113	√	213	√
114	√	214	√
115	√	215	√
116	√	216	√
117	√	217	√
118	√	218	√
119	√	219	√
120	√	220	√
Laundry x2	√	Reception x3	√
Main kitchen x3	√	Stores x1	√



Patient's activities x1	√	Human Resources x2	√
Multi-sensory room x1	√	Physiotherapy	Air conditioning fitted
Accounts Office x1	√	Outpatients Gym	Air conditioning fitted
Staff Dining Room x1	√ (Stored in kitchen).	Team Room x1	√
Reception Consulting Room x1	√	SAF Alcove. X1	√
Finance Office x1	√	Conference Room x1	√

## Appendix 2

Refrigeration equipment maintenance contract

### **RS REFRIGERATION SERVICES LTD.**

Unit 5, Murrell Green Business Park, London Rd, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9GR

Telephone: (01256) 760633 Fax: (01256) 760736

[www.rs-refrigeration.co.uk](http://www.rs-refrigeration.co.uk) Email: [adam@rs-refrigeration.co.uk](mailto:adam@rs-refrigeration.co.uk)

## Appendix 3

### **Snow and Ice Clearance procedure**

Priority will be given to the clearance of the drive to allow for access and egress by staff starting and ending their shifts and to allow for emergency vehicles to get in and out of the hospital. There must a minimum of two members of staff on duty when using the snow plough to ensure safety of both the caretaker using the plough and anyone that is in the vicinity.

The drive from Vicarage Lane down to the Hindhead Road is not owned by the hospital and is therefore a public highway, however if it is not cleared then access to the Hospital can be very treacherous. Clearance should be attempted first by using snow shovels, if it is deemed necessary to use the snow plough then it is crucial that a banksman is provided wearing reflective clothing to monitor traffic on Hindhead Road and ensure the safety of the driver of the snow plough. Snow should be disposed of in a responsible manner so that it does not cause any additional hazards on the main highway or to pedestrians.

Caretakers working out in the cold to facilitate snow and ice clearance should be suitably dressed with reflective waterproof jackets and trousers along with hats, gloves and goggles. Regular breaks should be taken after 90 minutes to have a warm drink and rest; caretakers will be provided with hot meals whilst they are working free of charge.

Commercial Grounds care provide us with assistance with snow and ice clearance for an annual retainer. The GM or AGM will liaise with CGC when snow and ice are forecast and communicate to caretakers and ward staff.