Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board
Severe Weather Policy

Introduction

This policy explains the action Board employees must take where severe weather makes work or travel unsafe or significantly disrupts attendance. It covers snow, ice, flooding, storms, high winds, lightning and extreme heat or cold. It applies alongside the Board's health and safety arrangements, emergency planning and employment terms.

It is our policy to:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and others affected by the Board's work, so far as is reasonably practicable. Employees must not be encouraged to make unsafe journeys. Ordinary commuting is normally the employee's responsibility; work-related travel must be risk assessed and managed by the Board.

General Rules

- If severe weather affects your ability to attend work safely, contact your manager as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before leaving home. If unavailable, contact the Works Manager or Clerk. If communications fail, do not put yourself at risk; try again when safe.
- Your manager will discuss local conditions and your circumstances before deciding whether safe attendance is possible, the journey should be delayed, or alternative duties, a safe alternative workplace or homeworking can be agreed. Decisions must take account of official weather, flood and travel advice as well as actual conditions; no warning colour alone establishes that work or travel is safe.
- If authorised to remain at home, remain contactable during your normal working hours or an expressly agreed standby period, subject to statutory leave and rest entitlements. Agree check-in times and any safe work you can do. Return to the workplace only when conditions have been reassessed and safe arrangements agreed with your manager.
- Keep in regular contact with your manager at the agreed times and report changing conditions, loss of communications or any inability to undertake agreed duties.
- If conditions become dangerous during work, stop the affected activity and move to a place of safety without waiting for permission where there is serious and imminent danger. Notify your manager as soon as it is safe. Your manager must assess whether work can safely continue, or whether to return to the depot or go home; neither return journey should be required if unsafe. Work must not resume while serious and imminent danger remains.
- A Board vehicle may be taken home only with the Works Manager's or Clerk's authorisation, appropriate insurance cover, a suitably licensed and competent driver, and checks that the vehicle and proposed journey are suitable for the conditions. A Board vehicle does not make an unsafe route safe. Do not drive through floodwater or ignore road closures.
- Where the Works Manager or Clerk decides that severe weather prevents safe travel and authorises staff to remain at home on call, staff will remain on full pay for the day. This arrangement will be reviewed daily. Employees working authorised alternative duties or from home receive their normal pay. Where the Board closes the workplace or instructs employees not to attend, employees who are ready, willing and able to work retain their contractual pay, subject to any lawful contractual provision.
- After 7 consecutive days of severe weather absence, the Clerk should seek advice from the Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman on remuneration and contingency arrangements. This review does not automatically end full pay or authorise a reduction in contractual entitlements. Any proposed change must be lawful, follow the Board's delegated authority and employment terms, and be communicated before it takes effect.
- Unreasonable failure to follow this policy may be considered under the Board's disciplinary procedure following investigation of the circumstances. No worker will be penalised for exercising applicable statutory health and safety rights, and no employee will be dismissed for a reason protected by section 100 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. This includes the statutory protections relating to leaving or refusing to return to a workplace in circumstances of serious and imminent danger reasonably believed to exist, where the danger could not

reasonably be averted, and taking appropriate protective steps. Statutory leave and reasonable adjustments must be respected.

- Where an employee cannot attend but the Board has not authorised paid weather standby, the manager must discuss safe alternative work, agreed changes to hours or duties, annual leave by agreement, or authorised unpaid leave, and confirm the pay position. Existing contractual or more favourable policy entitlements must be honoured. No deduction may be made without a lawful basis. Annual leave must not be imposed retrospectively; any requirement to take it must meet the applicable statutory notice requirements or a valid relevant agreement.
- Managers must consider individual circumstances, avoid discrimination and make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff under the Equality Act 2010. Employees should report any additional weather-related risk or support needed. Pregnancy-related and other health risks must be addressed through the Board's risk assessment arrangements. Employees have the right to reasonable time off to deal with an unexpected emergency involving a dependant, including unexpected disruption to care or school closure; notify the manager as soon as reasonably practicable. Such leave is unpaid unless employment terms provide otherwise.
- Any requirement to be on call outside normal hours must be expressly agreed or provided for in the employee's terms, with the contact arrangements, duties and pay made clear. Managers must record work and call-outs, assess whether restricted standby counts as working time, comply with applicable working-time limits and rest entitlements, and manage fatigue. Any emergency exception must be lawfully applicable, with compensatory rest where required; it is not a blanket exemption from the Working Time Regulations 1998.

IDB operational safety and emergency response

- The Works Manager, with the Clerk, must plan safe cover for essential drainage and flood-risk management work and use the Board's Emergency Plan where escalation is needed. Identify priority assets and tasks, competent staff, safe access, alternative cover and communications with relevant risk management authorities and emergency services. Emergency work must remain within the Board's powers, staff competence and safe systems of work; this policy does not authorise general rescue operations.
- Before deployment, the Works Manager must ensure a suitable and sufficient task- and location-specific risk assessment, record significant findings and brief affected staff and contractors. Monitor official weather and flood warnings and reassess as conditions change. Consider water levels and flows, unstable banks, submerged hazards, contaminated water, electrical equipment, wind, lightning, heat and cold, vehicle and plant suitability, safe access and escape, and risks to the public. Defer non-essential work where risks cannot be adequately controlled.
- Provide competent supervision, suitable protective equipment, welfare and first-aid arrangements, and task-specific rescue arrangements for work near water. Do not permit lone working where the assessment requires assistance or rescue cover. Agree check-in arrangements and action for missed contact; do not deploy staff where essential communications or rescue arrangements are unavailable. Staff must not enter floodwater or attempt an unplanned water rescue; summon the emergency services where life is at risk.
- Managers must record deployment, suspension and return-to-work decisions, their safety reasons and agreed pay or leave arrangements. The Clerk must communicate this policy to staff, consult staff or their representatives on safety arrangements, and review it after a significant event or relevant legal change and at least annually.

November 2022 Amendments

- Minor Formatting
- Removed LMIDB references

November 2023 Amendments

- Redefined the policy to include reasonably practicable action and clarification over responsibility while travelling to and from work.

November 2025 Amendments

- Changed supervisor to manager

November 2026 Amendments

- Extended severe-weather coverage and clarified safe travel, alternative working and contact arrangements.
- Added immediate stop-work safeguards and statutory protection against detriment or dismissal for protected health and safety action.
- Added IDB-specific risk assessment, essential-service cover, lone-working and water-safety controls, linked to emergency planning.
- Retained authorised full-pay weather standby and clarified pay, leave and the seven-day review without automatic loss of contractual entitlements.
- Added reasonable adjustments, emergency time off for dependants, and working-time and rest safeguards for standby and call-outs.