Severe Weather Planning Guidance for HSE Services

September 2024

This Guide was updated by the HSE Emergency Management Office

HSE National Emergency Management Office, Stewarts Care Limited,

Stewarts Hospital, Mill Lane,

Dublin 20, D20 XT80

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Abbreviations	Full Form
ACMT	Area Crisis Management Team
AEPG	Area Emergency Planning Group
CHOs	Community Healthcare Organisations
GPRN	Gas Point Registration Number
ICT	Information and communications technology
LCC	Local Coordination Centre
LCG	Local Coordination Group
MPRN	Meter Point Reference Number
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PRAs	Principal Response Agencies
RHAs	Regional Health Areas
VESs	Voluntary Emergency Services
WPRN	Water Point Reference Number

Table 1 Abbreviations

Acronyms	Full Form
NEMO	Health services (usually hospitals) that provide care or treatment of people with short-term serious injury or illness. Medical conditions requiring acute care are typically periodic or temporary in nature, rather than long term.
NEOC	Antimicrobial Resistance
REMO	Regional Emergency Management Office

Table 2 Acronyms

Foreword

Severe Weather episodes can have a significant impact on the HSEs ability to maintain full-service provision. The Government “Be Winter-Ready Information Campaign” provides advice and information to help the public to be better prepared to deal with a period of Severe Weather. The Office of Emergency Planning has prepared a booklet “Be Winter-Ready” and developed a website[1] to provide practical advice and contact details of the main services that can provide help in extreme weather-related emergencies. This initiative brings together all the relevant services to provide practical advice to the public.

As HSE managers, it is our duty to protect the health of all patients and populations, enhance the resilience of essential services, minimise the potential disruption (including infrastructure) caused by severe weather to the daily operations of the health service. It is crucial to recognise that severe weather doesn't solely affect HSE services; it also affects affiliated businesses, service support providers, and those within our supply chain, both in Ireland and internationally. Consequently, we must prepare our services and personnel, engaging in thorough contingency planning to address these challenges.

A Severe Weather checklist and associated guidance has been developed to assist managers in planning and preparing for events. This format is flexible and has the adaptability to cater for the diverse range of HSE services and facilities. The aim of the document is to allow the individual manager the freedom to plan within his/her domain without the prescriptive constraint of an imposed template. Each manager is required to address the document and develop Severe Weather preparedness for his/her area of responsibility. New challenges such as uncertain weather patterns are likely to increase and more likely to be extreme and these need to be incorporated when assessing constraints on service capacity during a severe weather event.

Scientific analysis and study surrounding the issue of ‘global warming’ informs us these uncertain weather patterns are likely to continue and the HSE must continue to review the methodology and manner by which we plan and prepare. Therefore, the content of this checklist and guidance must be considered part of an iterative process and subject to critique and annual review.

All Area Emergency Management Offices will provide you with support and advice to complete this process thus increasing HSE resilience in the face of severe weather events.

Tom Mc Guinness

Assistant National Director for Emergency Management

HSE National Office for Emergency Management

[1] www.winterready.ie

Introduction

Introduction

This HSE Severe Weather Guidance is to assist the managers of all HSE services in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the effects of a Severe Weather event. Individual services may be affected differently by impacts and this guidance will assist individual managers put in place appropriate measures to assist in the following during a Severe Weather event:

- Coordination of activities to minimise the effect of Severe Weather
- Ensuring effective communications systems are in place
- Maintaining the delivery of essential services
- Implementation of contingencies where necessary
- Monitoring and maintenance of adequate phased staffing levels within all clinical and non-clinical areas, including the redeployment of staff to critical areas where required
- Ensuring staff awareness of its service's contingency arrangements and those of other HSE services during a Severe Weather event

The format of this document comprises two parts: PART 1 – Checklist, and PART 2 – Guidance Document. Neither are stand-alone documents. Both documents are structured under the following sections:

- Planning
- Response
- Recovery

The Checklist should be completed in association with the Guidance provided. The Checklist and supporting documentation can be expanded to include each individual service's criteria as appropriate. This document should be listed as an appendix to the service's Major Emergency or Site-Specific Emergency Plan and reviewed/updated accordingly.

Note

This document supersedes all previous HSE Severe Weather documentation issued by the National Emergency Management Office. To ensure you have the most current and up-to-date version of the HSE Severe Weather Checklist and Guidance, managers should check the HSE Website[2].

[2] www.hse.ie

PART 1 – HSE Severe Weather checklists

HSE Severe Weather Checklists

Please insert into Answer column ✓ for yes, **X** for no, or **N/A** if not applicable to your service.

Planning and Preparedness Phase			
No.	Question	Ans.	Additional comments
Start point			
1.	Have you designated responsibility to a senior staff member for planning and preparing for a Severe Weather event (See Section 1.1)		
2.	Have you reviewed the key issues which arose during previous Severe Weather events that affected your service? (See Section 1.2)		
3.	Have you cross referenced & updated your existing Emergency Plan for Severe Weather preparedness? (See Section 1.3)		
Risk assessment			
4.	Have you completed/updated your Risk Assessment in the context of the effects of Severe Weather specific to your service/facility? (Section 1.4, Appendix B & C)		
5.	Have you put in place measures to reduce/eliminate (mitigate) any risks identified in your Risk Assessment?		Please attach or include the relevant information
Communications			
6.	Is your Directory of Contacts up to date? (See Section 1.6.1)		
7.	Have you identified method(s) of communication to relay messages to on and off duty personnel? (Section 1.6.2)		
8.	Have you contact details in your "Directory of Contacts" for all Contractors and Suppliers who provide services to your respective facility? (Section 1.6.3)		
9.	Have your methods of communicating messages to the public on a regular, coordinated basis? (Section 1.6.4)		
10.	Have you the means of activating a Helpline if required? (Section 1.6.5)		
11.	Are you familiar with the process for communicating with the Principal Response Agencies (An Garda Síochána and Local Authority – Fire Service) and requesting external assistance? (Section 2)		Also have you contact details for HSE services such as Environmental and Public Health

Planning and Preparedness Phase			
No.	Question	Ans.	Additional comments
Staff			
12.	Is Severe Weather an agenda item for your management team meetings? (Section 1.8.1)		Consider impacting factors such as infectious disease like Covid-19
13.	Have you considered the impact for staff of a Severe Weather period, e.g., PPE, alternative work locations, increased absenteeism rates, rosters etc.? (Section 1.8.2)		
14.	Are you and your staff aware of 'Met Éireann's National Weather Warning System'? (Section 2.1)		
15.	Are staff familiar with the Evacuation Plan for their facility? (Section 1.7.9)		
HSE Patients/Service Users			
16.	Is your register of vulnerable service users, including their Eircodes current? (Section 1.7.7 & 1.9.1)		
Business Continuity			
17.	Have you a process in place to complete the 'Service Prioritisation Chart' to ensure business continuity and identify services that maybe deferred? (Section 1.5 & Appendix D)		
18.	Have you a process in place to ensure supply of essential stocks relevant to your facility/service? (Section 1.9.4)		
19.	Is your current vehicle/fleet and those of your service providers/contractors capable of operating in Severe Weather conditions? (Section 1.9.3)		
20.	Have you identified alternative accommodation to relocate to, both short and long term, in order to continue to provide essential services? (Section 1.7.8)		
21.	Have you a current Evacuation Plan for your facility? e.g., Residential, non – residential etc. (Section 1.7.9)		
22.	Have you planned for external ice/snow clearance? Have you access to a stockpile of equipment? e.g., salt, sand shovels, entrance/exit walk off mats? Have you trained staff to use such equipment? (1.7.6) If flooding is a risk have you full sandbags? Have you considered flood defenses for critical equipment (Section 1.7.6)		

Planning and Preparedness Phase			
No.	Question	Ans.	Additional comments
Estates and maintenance			
23.	Have you developed contingencies with Estates and Maintenance to ensure that your facilities can be used during Severe Weather? (Section 1.7.6)		
24.	Has maintenance been carried out to limit damage to HSE facilities caused by Severe Weather in order to reduce Public Liability claims and comply with Health and Safety requirements? (Section 1.7.6)		
25.	Do you have a list of Eircodes for your current facilities? (Section 1.7.7 & Section 4)		
Utilities			
26.	Have you access to a list of relevant meter point reference numbers for electricity (MPRN), Water (WPRN) & Gas (GPRN)? (Section 1.7.2 – 1.7.5)		
Area Crisis Management Team (ACMT)			
27.	Does your Directory of Contacts include your service's nominated ACMT member so that you can contact them should you require the support of other HSE services?"		
28.	Are you familiar with the process for engaging with ACMT? (2.2 & 2.5) Are you familiar with who is your service representative on the ACMT? (Section 2)		
29.	Do you know who your designated Transport Liaison Officer is for your service?		
30.	Do you know who the Chief Officer (Chair of ACMT) has identified/designated to fulfill the role of Transport Coordinator for all HSE Services in the CHO (Community Healthcare Organisation) geographical area? (Section 2)		
31.	Have you included the contact details for your local HSE Emergency Management Office in your Directory of Contacts? (Section 1.6.1 Appendix H)		
Services			
32.	Have you identified a manager to act as a Liaison Officer for your area/service in respect of transport requests to liaise with the Area Transport - Coordinator? (Section 2.2)		
Your additional service specific considerations			
33.	Additional Service Specific Considerations		
34.	Additional Service Specific Considerations		

Energy Disruption - Planning & Preparedness			
No.	Question	Ans.	Any additional Comments
Please refer to Appendix I for further information on Energy disruption			
35	Have you appointed a senior staff member for planning and preparing for periods of energy disruption?		This should include engagement with your facility maintenance lead.
36	Have you cross referenced & updated your existing Emergency Plan & your Winter Plan for Energy Disruption preparedness?		
Risk Assessment			
37	Have you considered Energy Disruption as part of your Severe Weather Risk Assessment?		This should be aligned with general severe weather risk assessment
Communications			
38	Have you initiated a coordinated process to contact and communicate with (as appropriate to the situation) the following? • Staff (on duty and off duty) (Section 1.6.2) • Service users (1.9.1) Contractors and Suppliers to ensure continuity		On call engineers and other relevant personnel.
Staff			
39	Is Energy Disruption an agenda item for your management team meetings?		This may be a sub heading under Severe Weather agenda item
40	You should consider the following: • Redeployment options available • Robust review of what constitutes the critical workers required on site • Ensure remote workers follow guidelines re maintenance and charging of electronic devices • Provision of Staff awareness briefings • Staff working arrangements if there is power or heat loss, and how to		Remember there are two identified risks • Disruption to power supplies (Power Cuts) • Constraints on availability of Petroleum Oil (Road Diesel and Heating Oil)

41	Transport • Will constrained road fuel supplies impact staff attending work on time? • Do staff have access to public transport and how does this align with shift patterns?		
HSE Patients/Service Users			
42	Has your service an up to date register of vulnerable service users, including their Eircode's?		What medical devices has the HSE deployed to individuals and what contingency is there? • oxygen concentrators • dialysis machines • hoists is advice readily available to service users on how to maintain and test their devices
43	Are there potential impacts to the health and safety of patients and service users, in the following areas: • mains lighting lost • medical electronics, diagnostics, • labs, fridges and freezers, refrigeration of medication, pharmacies • contingency plans for providing food to patients if kitchens are compromised • risks to the water supply, pumping, treatment - potentially impacting hygiene, sanitation and ICP • suppliers impacted due to transportation difficulties? • linen, food, blood, labs, transportation, inter-hospital diagnostics		You should also consider your dependencies on other HSE services for example; What are the impacts if emergency ambulance services or interhospital patient transfers, are delayed?
Business Continuity			
44	Have you identified your current vehicle/fleet in terms of supply of Diesel under Oil Emergency Allocation Scheme?		

45	Have you identified your dependencies on oil or electricity for heating your facility?		What mitigations are in place?
46	Where a generator is installed: • has it been serviced and tested by a qualified electrician? • how long can it operate for with the fuel supply held on site? • what part(s) of your facility or campus does it cover?		All service and testing must be carried out in accordance with manufacturer guidance and by suitably qualified and competent personnel. You must consult with your local Maintenance Lead
47	Where an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) system is installed: • has this been tested and serviced by qualified and competent personnel? • does it cover all electronic equipment on-site? • Are servers and IT infrastructure at your facility protected in the event of power supply disruption?		Some clinical equipment may have a local UPS unit fitted to it, have these been tested in accordance with manufacture guidance You should engage with clinical engineers and local ICT as appropriate.
48	Security and safety - consider impacts of disruption to power supply on: • magnetic Locks, Access control, Alarms, CCTV • fire safety systems • emergency lighting		In addition to local maintenance leads, you may need to engage with your licensed security contractor(s) as appropriate

Response Phase			
No.	Question	Ans.	Additional comments
Communications			
59.	Have you initiated a coordinated process to contact and communicate with (as appropriate to the situation) the following? Staff (on duty and off duty) (Section 1.6.2) Service users (1.9.1) Contractors and Suppliers to ensure continuity of supplies (section 1.6.3)		
60.	Do you need to activate a dedicated "Helpline" for your service? e.g., Psychosocial support for people affected by flooding (Section 1.6.5)		
61.	From your service's perspective, do you need to issue messages to Service Users/Public via the media (local & national) websites etc. regarding the following: Staying safe (keeping warm)? Deferrals of some services? Where further information is available? Is HSE Public Health or Environmental Health advice required? (Section 1.6.4)		
62.	If you require assistance from agencies external to the HSE, do you know the established line of communication to activate these services? (Section 1.7, 2.2 & 2.3)		
Staff			
63.	Have you scheduled update meetings/briefings for staff?		
64.	Have you considered whether your staff require (as appropriate to the situation) the following? Personal Protective Equipment (1.7.6) Alternative work location (1.7.8) Special Transport Arrangements (2.2) Staff accommodation requirements (Section 1.7.8, 1.7.9 & p.52)		
HSE Patients/Service Users			
65.	Have you made contact with your vulnerable service users as appropriate to the situation? (Section 1.7.7, 1.9.1 & Section 2)		
66.	Have you considered if evacuation of your facility is required? (Section 1.7.9)		

Response Phase			
No.	Question	Ans.	Additional comments
Business Continuity			
67.	Have you considered your staff rosters and confirmed staff availability? Have you considered if you need to defer aspects of your service? Have you reviewed your stock supply to ensure continuity of service? Do you need to confirm "priority" supply process? Do you need to re-locate to another premises to continue service?		Give consideration to winter preparations for services such as test Centre's, CAHs, Labs etc.
Area Crisis Management Team (ACMT)			
68.	Has your ACMT been activated? Have you liaised with your ACMT representative? Have you provided to your ACMT representative an update on the effects of the Severe Weather event from your services perspective? (Section 2.5)		
Services			
69.	Has the Liaison Officer been stood up for your area in respect of dealing with transport requests? Has this person contacted the designated HSE Area Transport Coordinator? (Section 2.2)		
Your additional service specific considerations			
70.	Additional Service Specific Considerations		
71.	Additional Service Specific Considerations		

Recovery Phase			
No.	Question	Ans.	Additional comments
Recovery – return to normal function			
72.	Have you a process in place to ensure an efficient return to normal function? (Section 3.1)		
73.	Have you a process in place to facilitate a "Hot Debrief? (Section 3.1)		
74.	Have you a process in place to facilitate a "Cold Debrief? (Section 3.1)		
75.	Have you a process in place to capture and record 'Lessons Identified'? (Section 3.1)		
76.	Have you considered any long-term effects on your service caused by the Severe Weather event? (Section 3.1)		
Your additional service specific considerations			
77.	Additional Service Specific Considerations		
78.	Additional Service Specific Considerations		

PART 2 – Severe Weather guidance document

The following key areas should be considered by managers in preparing their services for the effects of Severe Weather.

This guidance is not prescriptive or restrictive and allows for managers to include specific aspects they deem relevant to their service. Guidance, requirements, and impacts need to be incorporated in all areas of services planning for severe weather episodes.

Section 1

Planning and Preparedness

Section 1 Planning and Preparedness

1.1 Designation of Responsibility

The Manager of each service should assign responsibility to a senior staff member and a designate to ensure their service has planned and prepared for the effects of a Severe Weather event. The key responsibilities for this role are to ensure the necessary processes and procedures are in place so that the service is prepared in so far as possible for the effects of a Severe Weather event and processes are in place to ensure staff are familiar with their requirements.

1.2 Lessons Learned

Severe Weather events may be sporadic in nature, spaced out by months, years, or decades. They may have significant impact on HSE services and communities at large and impinge on or prohibit the delivery of HSE services. It is recommended that managers consider the effects of previous Severe Weather events on their service(s) and ensure corrective actions are implemented from lessons learned. Previous positive outcomes should also be highlighted and recorded for future reference.

1.3 Cross Check of Plans

Managers should ensure that all Plans, Directory of Contacts and supporting documentation are cross checked annually, to ensure that all information contained with such Plans is current, up-to-date, and not conflicting with one another.

1.4 Risk Assessment

To prepare effectively for dealing with potential Severe Weather emergencies it is necessary to have regard to the specific risks associated with Severe Weather faced by a service or facility. Risk Assessment is a process by which the hazards facing a particular community (service/facility) are identified, analysed, and assessed in terms of the threat/risk which they pose.

A formal Risk Assessment as part of emergency planning is recognised as best practice nationally and internationally, please see examples of Emergency Management Risk Assessment and General HSE Risk Assessments under Appendix B & C.

A Risk Assessment in the context of Severe Weather aims to:

- Increase awareness of hazards associated with Severe Weather
- Identify mitigating actions to reduce negative impacts associated with Severe Weather
- Review the key issues and lessons learned during previous Severe Weather events
- Identify problems which can prevent or interfere with the ability to deliver services
- Identify points of vulnerability in the infrastructure, organisation, and staffing, which can impact on service delivery
- Develop and implement strategies to improve the resilience of facilities, equipment, vehicles, and service delivery
- Informs the development of contingency arrangements for the supply of critical items

To assist you complete a Risk Assessment; please refer to the HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures 2023[3].

This document describes the risk management process under the following headings:

- Scope, Context Criteria
- Risk Identification
    - Identify specific hazards in the context of Severe Weather to your facility. The following headings may be used to consider risks:
        - Location (Access/Egress)
        - Rivers
        - Coast
        - Forest
        - Lack of Staff
        - Power/Gas failure
        - Water shortage
        - Depletion of Supplies
- Risk Analysis (including Risk Rating)
    - Consideration of the risk presented by the identified hazards using the Impact versus Likelihood matrix
- Risk Evaluation
- Risk Treatment
- Risk Recording and Reporting
    - Recording potential hazards on a risk matrix. Record the Risk Assessment by plotting the identified Risks on a 5 x 5 matrix

Examples of Risks in the context of Severe Weather are as follows:

- Thunder & Lightning Strikes
- Aerial & Antennas on buildings
- Loose eave gutters
- Icy roads may have an impact on access/egress to facilities and staffs' ability to travel to work
- Frozen water distribution systems may compromise water supplies
- Flood water affecting access/egress to facilities
- Damage to facilities due to high wind
- Fallen trees may damage facilities and damage power supply
- Roads becoming impassable, temporarily blocked, and ultimately suffered severe damage from flood waters
- During summer months a prolonged heat wave may occur. Drought conditions could impact upon water supply reservoirs

[3] HSE Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures - Corporate

Plate 1 - Key Historical Evidence

Storms

- 2024 - 21 January, Storm Isha: caused power outages of 170,000 homes and businesses with associated fallen trees and travel disruption (including cancelled and diverted flights)
- 2018 - 28 Feb – 4 Mar, Storm Emma: Weather in Ireland during this period saw temperatures drop to record lows with widespread snowfalls across the country. Temperatures didn't rise above freezing even during the day as bitterly cold easterly winds swept in over the country due to anti-cyclonic conditions over Scandinavia. This caused widespread disruptions to roads, rail and air travel with work and school closures, as well as water shortages
- 2017 - 16 October, Storm Ophelia: The storm caused major power outages, lifted roofs, felled countless trees, and caused coastal flooding in Ireland. The tragic loss of three lives was also attributed to Storm Ophelia. All schools and many businesses closed for the day while the nation weathered out the storm
- December 2015 & January 2016, Storm Frank: gale force winds and gusts with extensive flooding
- January & February 2014, Storm Darwin: High Winds and Spring Tides resulted in widespread costal damage, fallen trees, structural damage, power supply interruption and flooding
- 2013/14 Winter Storms: The winter of 2013/14 was severely affected by an exceptional run of winter storms, culminating in serious coastal damage and widespread, persistent flooding
- Christmas Eve 1997, widespread damage caused
- August 1986, Hurricane Charlie, East and Southeast of the country affected by flooding and loss of power due to damaged transmission lines
- January 1974, Wind gusts of 124 m.p.h. were recorded at Kilkeel in County Down
- September 1961, Hurricane Debbie, winds reached hurricane force resulting in 12 fatalities and widespread damage

Severe cold

- 2009/2010 - prolonged cold spell
- 1970's - series of cold winter experiences resulting in a number of elderly fatalities
- 1947 - prolonged snowstorms

Flooding

- October 2023 - Storm Babet causing flooding in Cork City.
- August 2017 - Inishowen Peninsula, widespread damage to road and bridge infrastructure. Communities displaced from flooding to houses
- April 2016 - Cork City - Flooding
- December 2015/January 2016 - Athlone, Limerick, Leitrim, Galway - widespread flooding
- January 2014 - Limerick City Flooding
- August 2013 - Letterkenny Flooding
- Various 2012 - Cork County Flooding
- November 2009 – Flooding
    - Cork (City & County)
    - Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
    - Co. Clare, flooding along River Shannon affecting parts of Co. Clare & Co. Limerick
- August 2008 – Newcastle West, Co. Limerick
- November 2004 – Clonmel – Flooding/Heavy Rain
- November 2002 – Dublin – Flooding

1.5 Business Continuity

Business Continuity is a priority consideration during the Severe Weather event and must be planned. It focuses on ensuring that each department/function has processes in place to maintain or recover its critical services/activities to a level required for the continued care of patients/provision of services during the Severe Weather event.

Depending on the nature and severity of the event:

- The use of critical facilities can be prevented or restricted by flooding; lack of water, power outages and burst pipes, etc.
- Ambulances and other emergency vehicles may have difficulties on the roads
- Vehicles may be out of action as a result of collisions
- Staff may be unable to get to work
- Special health and safety issues can arise for staff (e.g., slips and falls on ice, vehicle accidents)
- Staff welfare can become an issue if the response goes on for an extended period of time

Management Teams/Managers should consider the following for Business/Service Continuity Planning:

- What essential services are to be maintained during the Severe Weather event ranked in order of priority: A list, taking the following into consideration is recommended:

    1. Essential services that must be maintained **at all times**
    2. Services that can be postponed for a period of more than **one day and less than one week**
    3. Services that can be postponed for a period greater than **one week and less than two weeks**
    4. Services that can be postponed for a period greater than **two weeks**

When the list is compiled, the Management Team/Manager should indicate who was responsible for making the decision of service priority. In order to assist you plan an effective response to Severe Weather, it is important that you take time to consider and outline your service priorities.

When making these decisions the following should be considered:

Is clinical input required?
Do we have a legal obligation/statutory function to maintain this service?
Does curtailing the service involve a break in the continuity of care to an individual?
Will cancelling the services cause undue hardship?
How long can the service be cancelled or curtailed for before it becomes critical?
Will cancellation or curtailment require additional measures to reinstate e.g., new outpatient appointments for those cancelled?
Decide when each cancelled or curtailed service will be reviewed for impact.

Table 3 decision considerations

- Maintenance of critical supplies - What is required to ensure maintenance of critical supplies?
- Staff roster contingency plan (by Department)
- Any other identified obstacles that may impinge/disrupt on the delivery of services to Patients/Service Users
- The possibility of staff working in locations close to their home address during Severe Weather should be explored. This is obviously dependent on available resources, appropriate qualifications, and the appropriate infrastructure to co-ordinate this process
- Consideration may also be given to the training/cross-skilling of additional groups of staff for key functions in critical areas. Nominate deputies with the necessary skill, knowledge, and authority to manage, make decisions and act.
- Consideration should be given to using alternative unaffected HSE facilities/support to ensure business continuity
- Consider providing facilities/support to other affected services where possible
- List any considerations not mentioned above

1.6 Communication Considerations

1.6.1 Directory of Contacts

Each manager should have access to an up to date 'Directory of Contacts' which should be reviewed frequently as part of their services emergency plan. This directory should include all available phone numbers for staff, ACMT members, suppliers, contractors, etc., e.g., mobile, office and home numbers. The contact details for the local HSE Emergency Management office should also be included, see Appendix G.

It is recommended that the 'Directory of Contacts' should be available in an identified, secure location in hard and soft copies in line with Data Protection Policies.

1.6.2 Communications with Staff

Managers should consider how they will effectively and efficiently communicate with members of staff on duty. Email, phone messages, convening a meeting of senior managers with the cascade effect, should all be considered. For off duty staff, all communication methods available should be considered, e.g., texting, phone, local media resources and social media (including "WhatsApp").

1.6.3 Communications with Suppliers and Contractors

It is recommended that managers have included in their 'Directory of Contacts' details for all suppliers and contractors who provide services to their respective facility. It is imperative that out-of-hours contact details are also maintained.

1.6.4 Communication with the HSE Service Users/Public

During periods of Severe Weather there is often a demand from the public for up to date, accurate information. Each service needs to be proactive in communicating with the public and getting the relevant information out through the most appropriate and approved communication channel. The following areas should be considered for public information:

What services may be affected? For example:

- Elective Surgeries
- Ambulance Services
- Transport Services
- Outpatients' clinics
- Day Care Centre's
- Home Support Services
- Is there Environmental Health Information required?
- Is there Public Health Information required?

This information may also be channeled to the public through the ACMT, if activated, or from Environmental or Public Health directly. Managers should also consider having plans in place to facilitate the establishment of a dedicated helpline if required, to deal with the potential increase in calls to a switch board, enquiring about the delivery of a particular service or services.

As an Organisation, the HSE needs to:

- Constantly collect and keep up-to-date information on HSE services which are affected by the Severe Weather
- Communicate this information to the public on a regular, coordinated basis, via all practical means e.g., information lines, local radio, newspapers, the HSE website, social media etc

Each manager should ensure that all communications from their services perspective are correct and current.

1.6.5 Helpline

It is important for managers to be aware of how a Helpline is established for their service. The service will be required to identify appropriate staff and a location to where the calls will be routed and a means of managing records and data. The establishment of a helpline can require significant resources. Managers will also have to consider in association with HSE communications how this Helpline will be publicised.

1.7 Considerations for place of Business

1.7.1 Information & Communications Technology (ICT) and Telecommunications

Managers should liaise with their local ICT departments to develop and implement strategies and arrangements to increase the resilience of the ICT and Telecommunications system within their department/services. Consideration should also be given to ensuring availability of back up chargers for mobile phones.

1.7.2 Utilities

Extensive or prolonged interruption of any of the main utilities could constitute an emergency. Power cuts and loss of other utilities can happen at any time and with little warning. It is important that each manager considers and takes steps to prepare for periods without electricity, gas, or mains water supplies.

1.7.3 Electricity

Managers should consider the following points pertaining to electricity:

- Each HSE facility will have one or more ESB Meters. Each Meter will have an associated Meter Point Reference Number (MPRN). In instances of a power outage or for any other reason the ESB networks will require the MPRN, therefore it is essential that Managers create a list of all HSE premises in their area of responsibility and their associated list of electricity Meter Point Reference Number(s) (MPRN)
- Ensure your facility is registered with the supplier as vulnerable
- Direct line for ESB Networks emergencies 1800 372 999 (include in 'Directory of Contacts')
- Access to an Electrician via an emergency point of contact as appropriate to your service (include in your 'Directory of Contacts')
- Electronic access and egress routes maintained
- Staff competent in their appointed role in the manual override of electrical systems
- Registering as a Priority Customer (5 days' notice for planned outages)
- Location of Fuse box/panels
- Generator(s) scheduled checks and fuel replenishment
- Back up equipment available if outage persists, e.g., Portable heaters (battery), torches, alternative lighting capability, battery operated appliances, etc.
- Be familiar with Powercheck.ie
- Alternate sources of heating, cooking, and lighting to be explored and accessible

The following are actions that may need to be considered, depending on the duration of the Power Outage:

- Contact electricity supplier, seek information about likely duration of outage
- Gather together emergency supplies
- Consider bringing all residents into one area
- Standby emergency evacuation of the premises and transport for same

1.7.4 Gas

Managers should consider the following points pertaining to gas supply

- A Gas Point Registration Number (GPRN) is a unique reference number assigned to every gas point on the natural gas network. It is essential that Managers maintain their list of GPRNs
- Priority Customer privileges. Ensure your service is registered with the supplier as a Priority Customer
- Know the location of, and how to use your shut off valve
- Know the location of your Gas Meter
- If you smell gas contact Gas Networks Ireland on their 24-hour emergency line 1800 20 50 50 (Phone number, include in 'Directory of Contacts')
- Commercial inquiries phone number for your Gas supplier should be included in 'Directory of Contacts'
- A contingency plan for interruption to your gas supply should be available
- Explore alternate sources for heating/cooking

1.7.5 Water

Managers should consider the following points pertaining to water supply. The loss of a service's water supply could have a significant impact on service delivery

- Emergency Contact Number for Uisce Éireann's (Irish Water) is 1800 278 278 to report water issues (include in 'Directory of Contacts')
- Inspect Water pipes regularly and ensure pipes are insulated for frost/ice.
- Know how to turn on and off your supply
- Know where your stop valve is located
- HSE need to advise Irish Water of HSE service users and HSE premises that may require sufficient emergency supplies
- A contingency plan in place for drinking water/service water supply
- Alternate sources of water to be identified
- Estimate your water requirements based on previous usage records

1.7.6 Estates and Maintenance

With such a widespread portfolio of properties, ranging from small health centres to large hospitals with their own road networks, there is a significant vulnerability, in respect of facilities, for HSE services in the event of Severe Weather. It is important that the Estates function should consider the main issues and vulnerabilities involved. They should develop and promulgate contingencies and give guidance on their implementation. This is necessary across all services and regions, so that the inherent resilience of services is protected and enhanced.

Severe Weather can impact on Estates and Maintenance in multiple ways. HSE Managers should establish across all HSE services where responsibility lies for dealing with any possible Severe Weather issues and mitigate against them. Contingency planning should include the equipment and training necessary to carry out any consequential tasks taking into account Health and Safety requirements.

Managers may need to consider:

- The servicing and checking schedule of Generators and ensure fuels/oils/lubricants and consumables are topped up prior to Severe Weather
- Checking that lightning conductors on all buildings are in place and in good state of repair
- Loose slates, floods in car parks, open windows/breaking glass etc.
- Who clears the footpaths/roadways during ice and/or snow?
- What roads and paths need to be cleared?
- Protecting the water supply to all facilities in terms of:
    - Identifying stopcocks where the water supply can be cut off in the event of burst pipes
    - Ensuring that water tank capacities are adequate for a reasonable period, in the event of a cut off of supply
    - Ensuring that there is appropriate insulation for tanks and pipes which are susceptible to freezing
- Identify facilities/buildings which may be subject to potential flooding and develop appropriate strategies as per your Risk Assessment
- Consider the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for relevant staff members, to include appropriate training where deemed necessary
- Consider all other aspects that could affect the delivery of services during a Severe Weather event

1.7.7 Eircodes

Use of Eircodes should be considered for all facilities, it is recommended that managers should have compiled a list of Eircodes for the following:

- Eircodes for their facilities
- Eircodes for addresses of service users/vulnerable clients

1.7.8 Alternative Accommodation

During a Severe Weather event some HSE buildings may not be fit for use, either in the short or long term. Managers should consider/identifying alternative accommodation from where services can continue to be delivered. This may involve identifying a number of locations where staff can be temporarily redeployed to, in order to ensure the delivery of services. In such circumstances HSE services should engage with one another and establish if one can be of assistance to another.

1.7.9 Evacuation Plan

Each facility both clinical and administrative must have an evacuation plan in order to provide its personnel with a plan of action should an emergency arise, that may lead to an evacuation of the said facility. This plan should be available in conjunction with the Severe Weather Plan. It is critical that staff are familiarised with the contents of the evacuation plan on a regular basis as evacuation may be required in an emergency with little preparation time. When considering transport and accommodation arrangements, it is important to consider the needs of the patients/residents.

1.8 Considerations for Staff

1.8.1 Staff Awareness

It is essential that familiarisation is provided for members of staff to ensure there is a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their position in terms of responding to the effects of Severe Weather. It is also important that each service maintains a group of staff who understand and are familiar with the requirements of the processes in place for their service to respond to the effects of Severe Weather. Each service's Senior Manager(s) should provide leadership and a focus for emergency preparedness. An annual assurance from managers of all departments/services that familiarisation sessions have taken place is recommended. Managers should consider a Risk Assessment on normal work activities due to Severe Weather and act accordingly.

This could be achieved by including briefing in:

- **At Induction,** appropriate information is provided to new employees and should include a Major Emergency Plan briefing which should include the Severe Weather Plan. This could be provided as part of Department/Service orientation.
- **On Review of the Plan,** staffs who fill Major Emergency Key Roles along with all Heads of Departments/Services should attend a formal briefing session on the Severe Weather Plan.
- **Annually** in each Department/Service, all Heads of Department/Managers should brief their staff on the current version of the Severe Weather Plan and record and maintain a log of same.

It is recommended that Severe Weather is included as an agenda item at strategic and operational management team meetings. It is important that managers are conscious of the consequences of (a) Severe Weather event(s) and the need to be continually prepared for such events.

1.8.2 Impact on Staff

- Staff may be unable to get to work
- There can be shortages of key supplies (e.g., medicines, fuel, etc.)
- Special health and safety issues can arise for staff (e.g., slips and falls on ice, vehicle accidents)
- Staff Welfare issues may arise

Line Managers should ensure that staffs are provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to allow them to carry out their role or function during a Severe Weather Event. Line Managers should consider having additional stock available or access to contingency supplies.

Managers should remind staff that seasonal Flu vaccination is recommended for all those working in health care settings.

1.9 Considerations for HSE Service Users & the Public

1.9.1 HSE Service Users/Patients

The identification of 'at risk' service users during a Severe Weather event can assist in developing mitigating actions that can reduce the impact of Severe Weather e.g., maintaining services to a service user requiring home dialysis, or, an elderly person living alone in an isolated area, etc. It is recommended that community-based services maintain a current register which aims to capture vulnerable service users whereby health, social, domestic, or environmental issues exist which may have an adverse effect on the service user or could cause undue hardship during disruption to services caused by Severe Weather.

Acknowledging that this is a dynamic situation, managers should ensure that there is a process in place locally for maintaining this register to ensure it is up-to-date and current. Relevant staff should refer to the nationally agreed Severe Weather Service User Vulnerability Register.

1.9.2 The Public

During periods of Severe Weather there is often a demand from the public for up to date, accurate information. Each service needs to be proactive in communicating with the public and getting the relevant information out through the most appropriate and approved communication channel. The following areas should be considered for public information:

- What services may be affected?
- Elective Surgeries
- Ambulance Services
- Transport Services
- Outpatients' clinics
- Day Care Centres
- Home Support Services
- *Is there Environmental Health Information required?*
- *Is there Public Health Information required?*

This information may also be channeled to the public through the ACMT, if activated, or from Environmental or Public Health directly. Managers should also consider having plans in place to facilitate the establishment of a dedicated helpline if required, to deal with the potential increase in calls to a switch board, enquiring about the delivery of a particular service.

As an Organisation, the HSE needs to:

- Constantly collect and keep up-to-date information on HSE services which are affected by the Severe Weather
- Communicate this information to the public on a regular, coordinated basis, via all practical means e.g. Information lines, local radio, newspapers, the HSE website, social media etc.

Each manager should:

- Establish a line of communications with HSE National Communications Office
- Ensure that all communications from their services perspective are correct and current

1.9.3 Vehicle/Fleet

It is recommended that managers with responsibility for procuring / maintaining / replacing vehicles / fleet consider an appropriate level of Severe Weather resilience, e.g., 4x4 capacities to ensure service delivery during a Severe Weather event. This should also apply to your service providers and their contractual obligations.

1.9.4 Procurement/Supplies

It is recommended that managers have contact numbers for procurement/direct suppliers to ensure a stock of priority supplies can be maintained if required. It is also recommended that suppliers are contacted in advance and their business continuity arrangements confirmed and that your service is listed as a priority customer particularly for a Severe Weather event. Consideration should also be given to the fact that they may be the sole supplier of a particular good/service.

1.9.5 Special Equipment

Managers should consider the need for special equipment e.g., salt, sand, shovels, external ice/snow clearance. The Risk Assessment will inform the decision on whether a facility requires a store of appropriate equipment on site or whether contact details of suppliers is adequate and whether flood defense mechanisms are required. Managers should also consider whether staff should be trained in the use of this equipment again the Risk Assessment will inform this decision.

1.10 HSE Emergency Management Function

The Emergency Management function assists leadership and management across all levels of the HSE in the preparation of major emergency plans and the identification and mitigation of strategic and operational risk to the organisation.

It also engages with other agencies, government departments and external bodies in order to ensure a health input to coordinated national resilience.

The Regional HSE Emergency Management Offices (See Appendix G for contact details) will support and advise HSE services in the relevant area in respect to planning for and responding to the effects of a Severe Weather event.

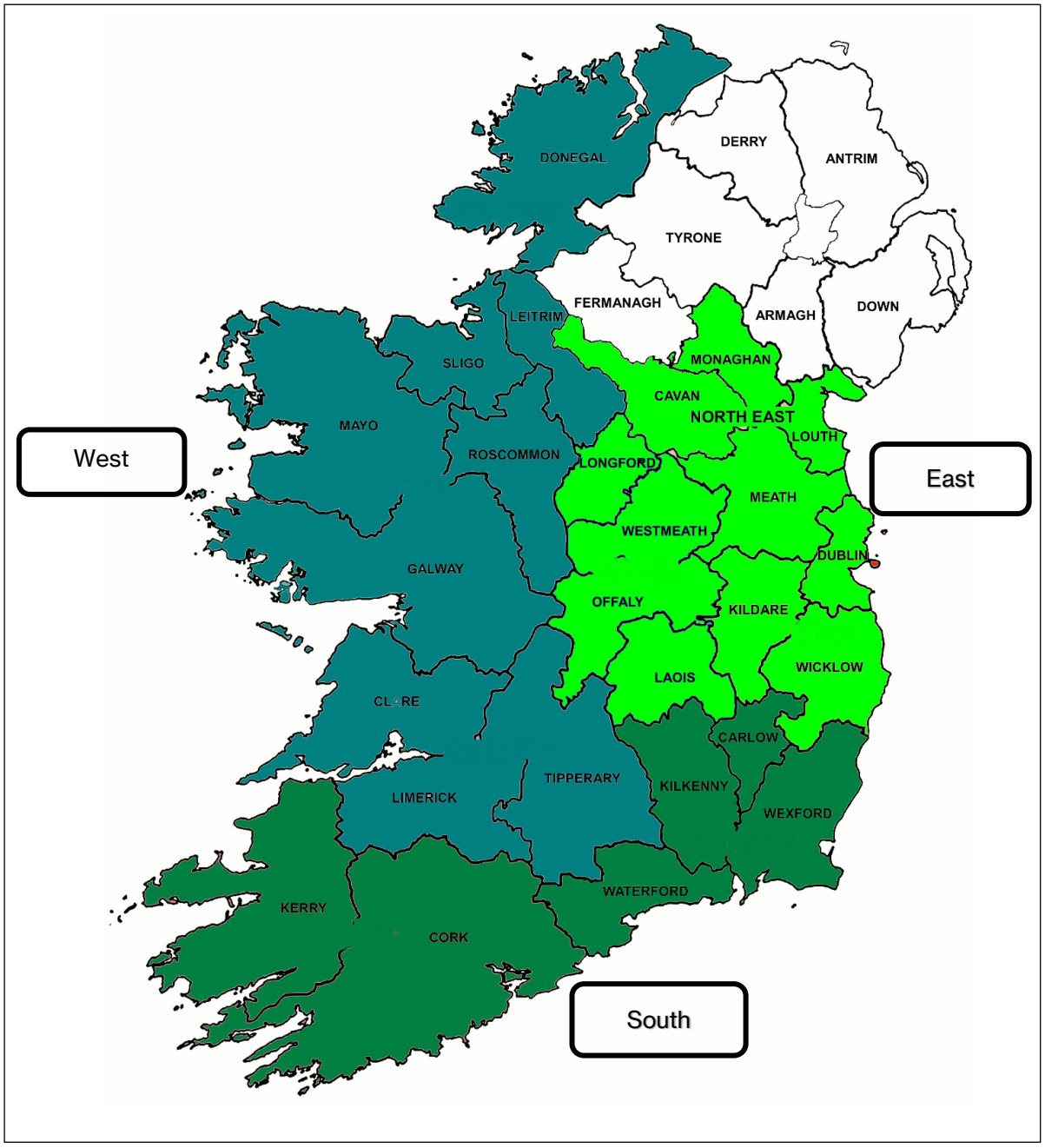


Figure 1 – HSE Regional Emergency Management Areas

Section 2
Response

Section 2 Response

2.1 Met Éireann National Weather Warning System

All information in this section is taken from the Met Éireann website[4]. Staff should be familiar with Met Éireann National Weather Warning System, the possible consequences associated with such warnings.

Cascading triggers need to be in place to activate the actions associated with the three weather categories.

2.1.1 Met Éireann Weather Warning System Explained

The issue of Weather Warnings is a function of the National Meteorological Service and includes a suite of Public Weather Services provided to citizens by Met Éireann. The core rationale for issuing Weather Warnings is to protect the lives and livelihoods of all of the nation's citizens and to mitigate damage to property and disturbance to economic activity at times of severe weather episodes.

The philosophy underlying the issuance of Weather Warnings by the National Meteorological Services has developed considerably over the past few decades. Internationally, much research has been carried out on the effects of extreme weather, and this has led to an increased focus on the "Impacts" of extreme weather rather on the statistical meteorological rarity of the extremities themselves. Thus, the timing and location of the occurrence of extreme weather can significantly affect the impact which extreme weather may have on society, or on the economy.

Another international development of significance is the maturing of the MeteoAlarm system, (see www.meteoalarm.eu) which implies greater co-ordination of warnings across Europe and the coherence of warnings across national boundaries. This has led to the adoption of a common European framework and terminology for the presentation of Weather Warnings, and the alignment of national Weather Warnings Systems with the international MeteoAlarm framework where this is possible.

Nationally, the Major Emergency Management framework and the designation of Local Authorities, the HSE and An Garda Síochána are the "Principal Response Agencies" (PRAs) with respect to emergency situations (of which a significant percentage will be the result of severe weather) have brought structure and formality to the allocation of responsibility for Emergency Response.

In response to these developments, the Weather Warnings system provided by Met Éireann has been updated and aligned fully with European best practice and with MeteoAlarm.

[4] please refer to https://www.met.ie/nationalwarnings/warnings-explained.asp

2.1.2 How are the Weather Warnings categorised?

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.

ACTIONS in the event of a Yellow weather alert

- HSE Managers will ensure Major Emergency Plans are up to date
- HSE Managers will check communication systems for their services
- HSE Managers will validate vulnerable service users' lists as appropriate to their service
- HSE Managers will identify possible impacts on services and facilities

STATUS ORANGE	**Weather Warning – Be Prepared**

This category of ORANGE level weather warnings is for weather effects which have the capacity to impact significantly on people and services in the affected areas. The issue of an ORANGE level weather warning implies implications for management in the affected areas should prepare themselves in an appropriate way for the anticipated conditions.

ACTIONS in the event of an Orange Warning

- Emergency Management will test ACMT notification system
- Chief Officer will consider ACMT activation
- HSE Managers will conduct a risk assessment specific to the forecasted weather effect on their service
- Service priorities around vulnerable service users to be addressed by HSE Managers
- HSE Managers to undertake staff planning to mitigate the effect of the severe weather event

STATUS RED	**Severe Weather Warning – Take Action**

The issue of RED level severe weather warnings should be a comparatively rare event and requires action by management. 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.

ACTIONS REQUIRED in the event of a Red Warning

- Chief Officer will activate ACMT (if not already done) and convene a meeting
- All HSE managers will communicate clearly with staff and co-ordinate actions
- If the NCMT is activated, the ACMT are to maintain liaison with same
- HSE Managers will prioritise the safety of service users and staff
- HSE managers will identify possible impacts on services and facilities

2.1.3 What weather conditions are warned for?

Hazards deriving from the following weather-related types are covered by Met Éireann's weather warnings system:

1. Wind
2. Rain
3. Snow
4. Low Temperatures
5. Fog
6. High Temperatures
7. Thunderstorms
8. Coastal Wind Warnings

2.1.4 When will Weather Alerts/Warnings be issued?

Weather Alerts and Warnings will be issued whenever weather conditions meeting the detailed thresholds defined below are anticipated within a 48hr period. There will be judgment required on the part of the forecaster who must weigh up the possible severity of the weather conditions and the likelihood of their occurrence. However, on some occasions (weekends, holiday periods) it may be necessary to issue Weather Warnings beyond this 48hr horizon, if sufficient certainty derives from examination of the weather charts. Normally, however, a Weather Advisory (see below) will be used to flag severe weather beyond 48hrs, and Advisories will normally anticipate only "Orange" or "Red" criteria weather hazards.

Given that the thrust of the Weather Warnings service is on potential "Impacts" of weather rather than on the numerical values attained by the weather elements themselves, it may on occasion be appropriate to issue warnings at a level higher than that strictly justified by the anticipated weather elements. An example would be when heavy rain was expected which might not quite meet the "Orange Warning" criteria, but which might give rise to significant flooding because of already saturated ground, or because of a combination of rain, wind, and tide in a coastal location.

2.1.5 Weather Advisories

Weather Advisories may be issued to provide early information on potential hazardous weather beyond the 48hr horizon. They may also be employed when a sum of weather elements acting together create a significant hazard, e.g., winds which may not be up to warnings strength but which, when combined with high tides and significant swell, generate a risk of flooding. Another possible use would be to advise of wind speed and direction on occasions of Volcanic Ash contamination. They might also be used to advise of expected significant medium-term accumulations of rain during a very unsettled period when soils are known to be saturated. The issue of Weather Warnings and Weather Advisories is at all times down to the judgment of the Met Éireann forecasters.

2.1.6 Weather Warning Criteria

The criteria for the different warning levels (Yellow, Orange, and Red) and the different weather elements (Rain, Wind etc.) are laid out in the tables below.

National Weather Warnings System, with the associated criteria for Weather Alerts:

Weather Element	Criteria for Yellow – Weather Alerts
1. Wind	Mean Speeds between 50 and 65 km/h Gusts between 90 and 110 km/h
2. Rain	30mm – 50mm in 24 hrs 25mm – 40mm in 12 hrs 20mm – 30mm in 6 hrs
3. Snow/Ice	Scattered snow showers giving accumulations of less than 3 cm below 250m AMSL. Slippery paths and roads due to accumulation of ice on untreated surfaces; situation improving
4. Low Temperatures	Minima of minus 3C or minus 4C expected Maxima of plus 1C or plus 2C expected
5. Fog	No Criterion
6. High Temperature	Maxima in excess of 27C expected
7. Thunderstorms	No Criterion
8. Coastal Winds	Gale Force 8 or Strong Gale Force 9 (Mean Speeds)

Table 4 Yellow weather alerts criteria

Weather Element	Criteria for Orange – Weather Warnings
1. Wind	Mean Speeds between 65 and 80 km/h Gusts between 110 and 130 km/h
2. Rain	50mm – 70mm in 24 hrs 40mm – 50mm in 12 hrs 30mm – 40mm in 6 hrs
3. Snow/Ice	Significant falls of snow likely to cause accumulations of 3 cm or greater below 250m AMSL. Slippery paths and roads due to accumulation of ice on untreated surfaces; situation stable
4. Low Temperatures	Minima of minus 5C to minus 9C expected Maxima of 0C or minus 1C expected
5. Fog	Dense fog likely to cause a widespread and significant driving
6. High Temperature	Maxima in excess of 30C or minima in excess of 20C expected
7. Thunderstorms	Widespread thundery activity over an area of several counties
8. Coastal Wind Warnings	Storm Force 10 (Mean Speeds)

Table 5 Orange weather alerts criteria

Weather Element	Criteria for Red - Severe Weather Warnings
1. Wind	Mean Speeds in excess of 80 km/h Gusts Speeds in excess of 130 km/h
2. Rain	70mm or greater in 24 hrs 50mm or greater in 12 hrs 40mm or greater in 6 hrs
3. Snow/Ice	Significant falls of snow likely to cause accumulations of 8 cm or greater below 250m AMSL. Slippery paths and roads due to accumulation of ice on untreated surfaces; likely to worsen
4. Low Temperatures	Minima of minus 10C or lower expected Maxima of minus 2C or lower expected
5. Fog	No Criterion – not displayed
6. High Temperature	As Orange criterion but persisting for two or more consecutive
7. Thunderstorms	No Criterion – not displayed
8. Coastal Wind Warnings	Violent Storm Force 11 or greater (Mean Speeds)

Table 6 Red weather alerts criteria

2.1.7 Cascading Met Éireann Weather Alerts/Warnings to activate responses

Being alert to the risks and threats to service delivery and infrastructure stability allows managers and staff to anticipate the form in which disruption might take and the circumstances under which they may occur. They can take steps to reduce the probability of disruption to service delivery and minimise the effects when they occur. Met Éireann communicates Weather Alerts to the national Media (Radio & TV) and through the Met Éireann Website[5].

2.1.8 Cascading of Met Éireann Weather Alerts/Warnings in the HSE

Met Éireann Weather Alerts/Warnings are communicated to the HSE Emergency Management function. The appropriate Regional Emergency Management Office (REMO) will cascade the Weather Alert/Warning to the relevant ACMT. It is essential that a further cascade of these Weather Alerts/Warnings occurs to appropriate staff in their respective services and the associated actions are carried out.

[5] https://met.ie/

2.2 HSE Contingency Transport Plan

2.2.1 Background

During Severe Weather events where traffic ability maybe impacted and where disruption occurs to road services, while it is the HSEs intent to remain self-sufficient regarding the transport of patients and staff, it may be necessary to seek external support. In order to effectively manage and co- ordinate external support, each Chief Officer is required to appoint an ACMT Transport - Coordinator (typically at General Manager or above Level) to fulfill this role from their respective ACMT. All transport requests will be coordinated and managed through the nominated ACMT Transport - coordinator. The ACMT Transport - Coordinator will establish and chair a transport subgroup. This group will be responsible for managing and coordinating all transport requests. Its composition will include representation from all HSE functions in the CHO area within the remit of the ACMT geographical area.

2.2.2 Planning process

2.2.2.1 ACMT Transport - Coordinator

Working with the Area Emergency Planning Group (AEPG), the ACMT Transport - Coordinator will establish and chair a transport subgroup to coordinate, manage and prioritise all transport requests and allocate sanctioned requests to an appropriate agency for action. In advance of severe weather episodes, the ACMT Transport - Coordinator is responsible for establishing and maintaining the following:

- A clear messaging system for ACMT transport structures
- A triaging process for transport requests (based upon clinical urgency and movement of key staff)
- Embed liaison arrangements with local agencies including the Voluntary Emergency Services, Defence Forces etc.
- Put in place resilience measures and 'self-help' mechanisms
- Develop an itinerary of available response resources and test response capability
- Establish transport providers' capability (and consider any impacts such as infectious disease)

2.2.2.2 ACMT Transport subgroup

An ACMT transport subgroup will be established by the ACMT Transport Coordinator. The subgroup will include representation from all HSE functions (including healthcare facilities) in the CHO area within the remit of the ACMT geographical area. The group will be responsible for planning and responding to all transport requests during a severe weather event. The ACMT transport subgroup is responsible for establishing and maintaining the following:

- Work with functions and put in place arrangements to mitigate risks associated with severe weather events
- Work with functions and put in place plans for service reorientation, essential service delivery and the cancellation of services
- Work with functions to ensure a live register of severe weather vulnerable service users is current and available
- Review surge capacity and the need for and availability of resources if the severe weather event is forecast for a prolonged period of time
- Establish link with local co-ordination group through ACMT structure
- Promote individual safety of staff and service users

2.2.3 Activation of external arrangements

Where Severe Weather exists or is imminent, the ACMT and Transport Coordinator will assess the situation and a decision will be made in relation to activating contingency transport arrangements. The provision of contingent transport will be managed and coordinated by the ACMT transport subgroup, who will be in regular contact with the ACMT through the Transport Coordinator. Where the activation of contingency transport arrangements with external agencies is required, it must be pre-cleared at national level. **Any costs/charges associated with the request for external assistance will be borne by the service making the request.**

2.2.3.1 Defence Forces

If the Defence Forces are to be utilised, a request to activate needs to be sent from the ACMT to the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), who will contact the Department of Defence outlining the scope and scale of the request. This in turn will activate local mobilisation arrangements with the ACMT transport subgroup.

2.2.3.2 The Voluntary Emergency Services (VESs)

If the Order of Malta, Red Cross, or St. John Ambulance are to be utilised, a request to activate needs to be sent from the ACMT to the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), who will contact the Voluntary Emergency Services (VESs) National office/headquarters outlining the scope and scale of the request. This in turn will activate local mobilisation arrangements with the ACMT transport subgroup.

2.2.3.3 Civil Defence

Activation of the Civil Defence will be initiated by the ACMT Transport Coordinator through the Chief Executive (or designate) of the relevant Local Authority.

No requests outside of these processes or from individuals will be considered

The transport sub-group will be responsible for the co-ordination and management of all transport requests, except 999/112 calls which will be managed by NEOC (National Emergency Operations Centre).

2.2.4 Response process

2.2.4.1 ACMT Transport Coordinator

- Activate, convene, and chair the ACMT Transport subgroup
- Maintain communication with the ACMT

2.2.4.2 ACMT Transport subgroup

- Activate ‘self-help’ mechanisms
- Undertake dynamic risk assessments as severe weather events unfold to ensure that service priorities are clear
- Establish communication with available response agencies and determine capacity
- Activate structures to deal with received requests (receipt of requests, national activation of defence forces, management and coordination of requests, allocation of a request to an agency etc.)
- Activate triaging process
- Establish links with neighbouring ACMT to determine if they have been impacted and establish their response capacity
- Confirm capacity to transport an infectious disease case

Below, please find a sample (non-exhaustive) stream to illustrate the request flows to ACMT Coordinator (to be completed for ACMT geographical areas in the planning phase).

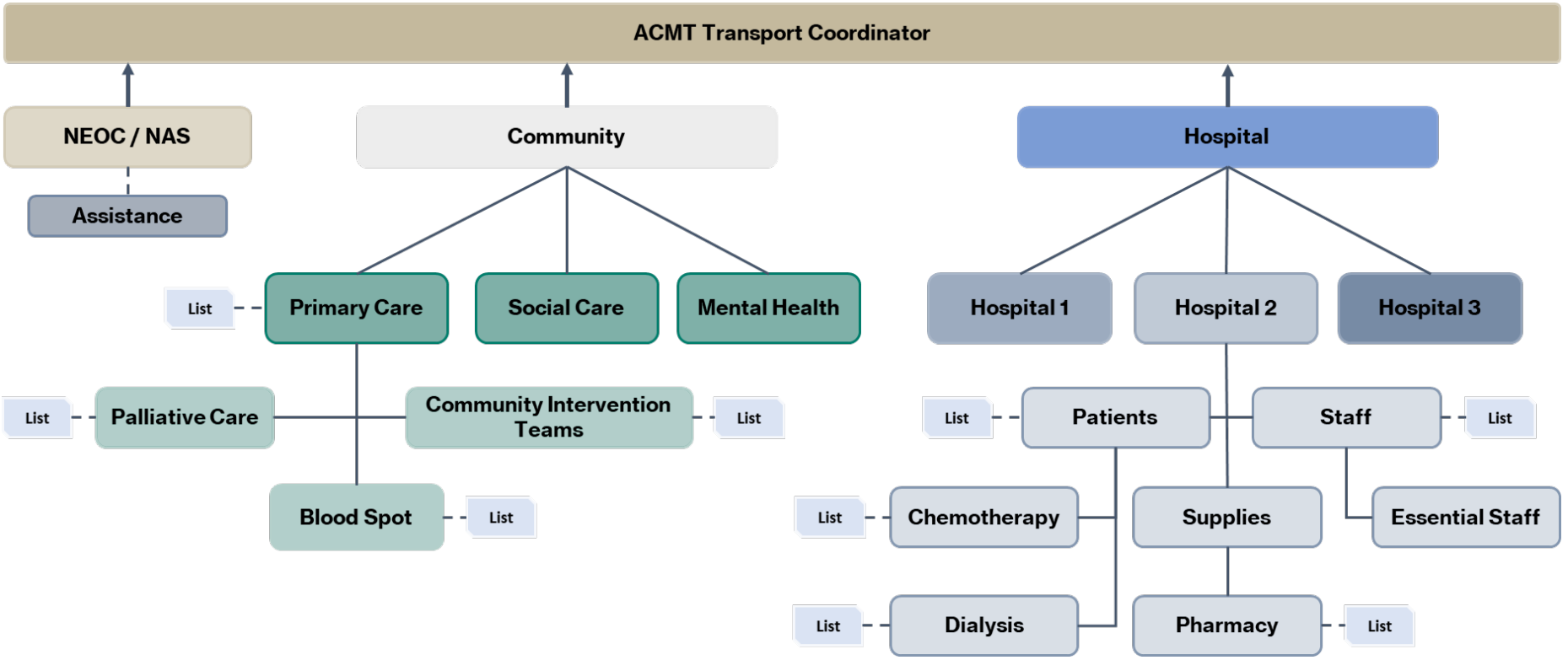


Figure 2 Request flows to ACMT Coordinator

2.3 Prioritising Services

Co-ordinated planning is required to ensure that only key agreed priority requests are submitted for consideration by the transport subgroup. Priorities should be considered in terms of threats to life and health and welfare of service users and staff. All areas are required to prioritise essential patient services and have contingency mechanisms in place for contingency such as staff rostering. Where disruption is expected to be protracted, emergency contingency arrangements need to be planned for to maintain service delivery and business continuity. During periods of severe weather episodes, key priorities include:

- Ensure that service priorities are sustained
- The safety and wellbeing of staff is maintained in accordance with HSE policy[6]

Only requests completed as per Appendix A will be considered.

2.4 Procurement/Supplies

It is recommended that managers have contact numbers for procurement/direct suppliers to ensure a stock of priority supplies can be maintained to response requirements.

2.5 Area Crisis Management Team (ACMT)

Should the need to activate the ACMT for your service be required, this can be achieved by contacting the NEOC. The NEOC will send a text message to the appropriate ACMT, who will then be expected to dial into an audio-conferencing facility.

In line with HSE policy and the requirements of the 2006 Framework for Major Emergency Management, the HSE already has in place:

- **HSE Area Emergency Planning Groups** for all HSE Services covering the geographical area of each Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs), which are supported by their respective Chief Emergency Management Officers
- **Major Emergency Plans** for each Area, the National Ambulance Service (NAS), Acute Hospitals and CHOs
- **ACMTs,** which can organise and co-ordinate the Area HSE response and Interagency response arrangements with Local Authorities and Garda Divisions

2.6 Interagency Local Co-ordination Groups (LCG)

This strategic level group comprises of the Chief Superintendent of An Garda Síochána, the Chief Executive Officer of Local Authorities and the Chief Officer or designate of the HSE. During a Severe Weather event a Major Emergency may or may not be declared, but it is recommended that all agencies use the processes in place for major emergency management to coordinate the response to a Severe Weather event. In this instance a representative (usually from the CHO service) of the HSE will attend meetings at the Local Coordination Centre (LCC). Specialised HSE services such as Environmental Health and Public Health may attend these meetings as required. Should the HSE require support from any of the external agencies on the LCG, this request will be channeled through your services representative on the ACMT and onto the LCG as required.

[6] https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/ncr/adverse-weather-policy-red-weather-events-.pdf

2.7 Summary of Key Actions in Response (Non exhaustive list)

In the response phase Managers should ensure that they have considered:

- Patient/Service User & Staff safety (alternative accommodation may be required)
- Staff needs (is PPE required? Do they need accommodation/welfare needs?)
- From a service prioritisation point of view, do we need to defer some services?
- Continuity of supplies?
- Staff Briefings/updates
- Are Special Transport arrangements required (consider infectious disease)?
- Have you established a link with the ACMT?

Section 3
Recovery

Section 3 Recovery

3.1 Recovery/Return to Normal Business

After a Severe Weather response stage has passed, the recovery stage is also important. It includes consideration of many strategic issues, particularly to your service or department.

These need to be addressed at local and interdepartmental level, both in relation to internal and external agencies.

The recovery phase typically includes:

- Planning a smooth return to normal service delivery
- Providing continued support and services to persons affected by the emergency e.g., psychosocial support, etc.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of the response and capturing the lessons identified
- Review of service delivery capacity during response phase
- Restoring normal functioning of supply chains and working with providers in identifying future contingency plans
- Being aware of the economic consequences and the requirement for emergency funding from both a service and service user perspective

A structured transition from response to recovery is critical for both providers and service users, both collectively and individually. The recovery stage may be as demanding on resources and staff as the Severe Weather episode itself. As work may extend for a considerable time after the weather episode, common arrangements are required for co-coordinating the recovery stage. There will inevitably be issues around service back logs due to the prioritization of specific services during the response phase.

Section 4
Appendices

Section 4 Appendices

Recommended Appendices to the Severe Weather Plan, add additional Appendices as you require:

Appendix A - Severe Weather Transport Request Form

Contingency Transport Request Form

This form is intended to cover contingency transport requests (service users and staff). Transport will only collect from and travel to the designated address as identified. A designated collection point may be identified for group collection. The request for transport should only be made to support the delivery of essential services such as:

- essential home visit (staff must have the necessary equipment to complete the call)
- transport service users to a specific destination
- transport staff to a work destination.

Contact should only be made with the **ACMT transport subgroup**.

Please ring your request through to INSERT NAME and email INSERT ADDRESS and fax INSERT NUMBER with a completed Transport Request Form for due consideration.

Transport Request Form				
Service users (tick)		**Staff (tick)**		
Requesting Person	NAME	TITLE	Contact No.	Email/Fax No.
Purpose of Transport	EXPLAIN URGENCY FOR TRANSPORT REQUEST i.e., is it clinically critical			
HSE staff requiring transport	NAME	Telephone/Mobile No.		
Service user requiring transport	NAME	Telephone/ Mobile No.	Child/Adult	
Total number requiring transport	(Including escorts)			
Infectious disease status (if known)	Covid-19___ Positive ___ Unknown Other			
Consent obtained to share details	GDPR compliant			
Other relevant detail	Oxygen, wheelchair, stretcher, special requirements etc.			
Collection Address	e.g., patients address, hospital address, health centre address etc.	include Eircode		
Destination Address	e.g., patients address, hospital address, health centre address etc.	include Eircode		
Once off Visit or recurring	PLEASE EXPLAIN REASON FOR RECURRING VISITS			
Requested by	Service Manager	Date/Time		
Recommended by	Transport coordinator	Date/Time		
FOR ACMT Transport subgroup				
Decision	**Approved/Not approved**	**Requesting person informed**		
If approved request sent to:				
Accepted by	Name	Number	Time	
Comment				
Signed:		**Date & Time:**		

Appendix B - Risk Assessment as per Framework for Emergency Management

*(Refer to **www.mem.ie**)*

Establishing the Context

Name of Facility/Function	
Address	
Type of Service	
Number of Staff	**Day:** **Night:**
Number of Clients/Patients if applicable	

Table 7 Context

Hazard Identification

Extended spells of Severe Weather are possible in Ireland throughout the year, possible Hazards from this Severe Weather are as follows:

- Icy roads may have an impact on access/egress to facilities and staffs ability to travel to work
- Frozen water distribution system(s) may compromise water supplies
- Flood water affecting access/egress to facilities
- Damage to facilities due to high wind
- Fallen trees may damage facilities and damage power supply
- Roads becoming impassable, temporarily blocked, and ultimately suffering severe damage from flood waters
- A prolonged heat wave may occur. Drought conditions could impact upon water supply reservoirs.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list and must be populated with hazards appropriate to your facility

Key Historical Evidence Storms:

- January 2024, Storm Isha
- October 2017, Storm Ophelia
- December 2015 & January 2016 Storm Frank, gale force winds and gusts with flooding
- January & February 2014, High Winds and Spring Tides resulted in widespread costal damage, fallen trees, structural damage, power supply interruption and flooding
- Christmas Eve 1997, widespread damage caused
- August 1996, Hurricane Charlie, East and Southeast of country affected by flooding
- January 1974, Gust of 124 m.p.h. was recorded at Kilkeel in County Down
- September 1961, Hurricane Debbie - winds reached hurricane force resulting in 12 fatalities and widespread damage.

Severe cold:

- 2009 – 2010, prolonged cold spell
- 1970's, a series of cold winters experiences, a number of elderly fatalities
- 1947, Prolonged snowstorms

Flooding:

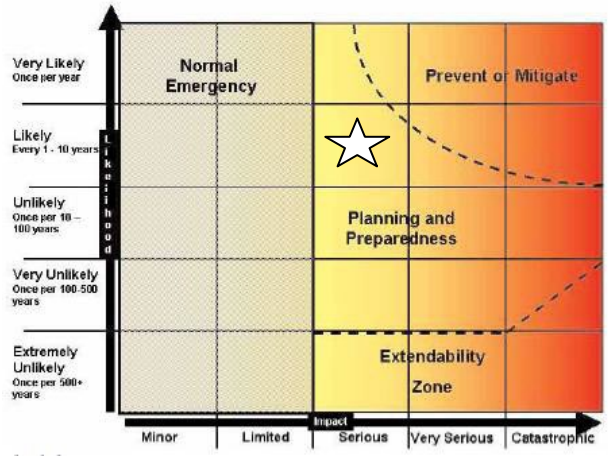
- October 2023 - Storm Babet causing flooding in Cork City.
- August 2017, Inishowen Peninsula, widespread damage to road and bridge infrastructure Communities displaced from flooding to houses
- April 2016, Cork City – Flooding
- December 2015 & January 2016 Athlone, Limerick, Leitrim, Galway significant widespread flooding
- January 2014, Limerick City Flooding
- August 2013 Letterkenny Flooding
- Various 2012, Cork County – Flooding
- November 2009 – Flooding
  - Cork (City & County),
  - Ballinasloe, Co. Galway,
  - Co. Clare, flooding along River Shannon affecting parts of Co. Clare & Co. Limerick
- August 2008, – Newcastle West, Co. Limerick
- November 2004 – Clonmel – Flooding/Heavy Rain
- November 2002 – Dublin – Flooding

Risk Assessment of Impact and Likelihood

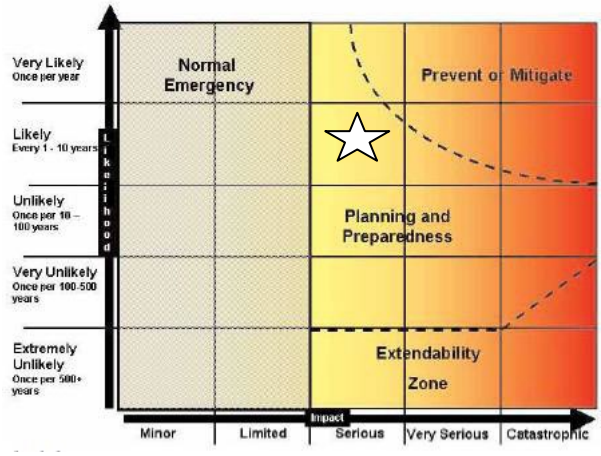
Hazard	Impact				Likelihood
	Human Welfare	Environment	Physical Infrastructure	Social	
Extremes of Weather Including: • Storms • Severe Cold • Flooding	**Very Serious** - 5-50 fatalities, up to serious 100 injuries depending on number of people involved and the nature of the incident.	Minor - No contamination, localised effects.	Very Serious -	Serious - Community functioning poorly, minimal services available	Likely (One 1-10 years)
				❖	❖

Position on Risk Matrix

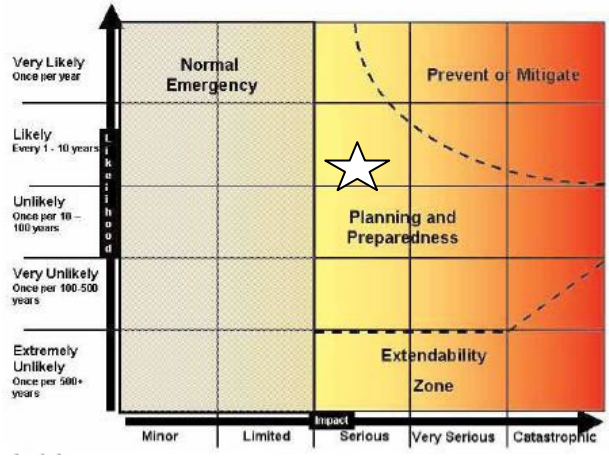
Severe Cold



Flooding



Storms



Prevention/Control/Mitigation Measures in Place

EXTERNAL

Local Authority Severe Weather Plans

- Local Authority Salting/Gritting Plans – Ice-cast System
- Met Éireann Forecasting
- Local Authority plans for emergency accommodation centres with necessary equipment and supplies.
- Use of water tankers for water distribution.
- Road Design
- Community Resilience Planning
- Ongoing development of plans for emergency accommodation centres with necessary equipment and supplies
- Coastguard/Air Corp Assistance

INTERNAL

Please populate with any mitigation measures i.e., business etc.

- Sandbags, flood defences
- Access to extra supplies
- Staff accommodation arrangements
- Transport Contacts
- Ground maintenance Surveillance
- Health & safety measures pertaining to Severe Weather

Appendix C - Risk Assessment HSE

Risk Assessment Form	
Division:	**Source of Risk:**
HG/CHO/NAS/Function:	**Primary Impact Category:**
Hospital Site/Service:	**Risk Type:**
Dept/Service Site:	**Name of Risk Owner (BLOCKS):**
Date of Assessment:	**Signature of Risk Owner:**
Unique ID No:	**Risk Co-Ordinator:**
Objective being impacted:	[7]**Risk Assessor(s):**

[8]HAZARD & RISK DESCRIPTION	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES	ACTIONS [ADDITIONAL CONTROLS] REQUIRED	[9]ACTION OWNER	DUE DATE

[10]Inherent Risk			[11]Residual Risk			[12]Target Risk			Risk Status		
Likelihood [1-5]	Impact [1-5]	Rating [Likelihood x Impact]	Likelihood [1-5]	Impact [1-5]	Rating [Likelihood x Impact]	Likelihood [1-5]	Impact [1-5]	Rating [Likelihood x Impact]	Open	Monitor	Closed

[7] Risk Assessor required for OSH risks only.
[8] Where the risk being assessed relates to an OSH risk, please ensure the HAZARD and associated risk are recorded. Other risk assessments require a risk description only.
[9] Person responsible for the action.
[10] Rating **before** consideration of existing controls.
[11] Rating **after** consideration of existing controls.
[12] Desired rating **after** actions.

Appendix D - Service Prioritisation Chart

SERVICE PRIORITIES			
Category	**Headings**	**List**	**Responsible person**
1	Essential services that must be maintained **at all times**		
2	Services that in an emergency can be postponed for a period of more than **one day and less than one week**		
3	Services that in an emergency can be postponed for a period greater than **one week and less than two weeks.**		
4	Services that in an emergency can be postponed for a period greater than **two weeks**		

Appendix E - Directory of Contacts

HSE Internal Contacts

Name	*Position in HSE*	*Mobile Phone*	*Office Phone*	*Home Phone*	*Email Address*	*Office Address*

External Contacts

Name	*Position/Job Title*	*Mobile Phone*	*Office Phone*	*Home Phone*	*Email Address*	*Office Address*

Appendix F - List of Utility Point Reference/Registration Numbers

ESB Meter Point Reference Number(s) (MPRNs)

Facility and Address	Meter Point Location	MPRN Number

Gas Point Registration Number(s) (GPRNs)

Facility and Address	Meter Point Location	GPRN Number

Water Point Reference Number(s) (WPRNs)

Facility and Address	Meter Point Location	WPRN Number

Appendix G - Energy Disruption

A power outage or loss of heating can have serious consequences in a health care setting with potential impacts to patients and service user care. Medical equipment and devices often rely on electricity to function. Contingency is required for patients who are on life support or who require continuous monitoring, such as those in intensive care units. An outage can affect the ability of health care facilities to store and access patient records including the use of electronic health record systems to manage patient information, as these systems may be inaccessible. Heating may be impacted as well as water supply and lifts etc.

In order to manage a disruption to energy supplies, appropriate planning and preparedness is required. HSE Emergency Management in conjunction with the Energy Disruption Sub Group of the National Crisis Management Team, prepared this appendix to the HSE Severe Weather Guidance Document. By implementing appropriate measures, HSE managers can help ensure the safe delivery of services and maintain the well-being of patients and service users. This additional Checklist and Guidance has been produced to assist all HSE service managers prepare and respond to a period of energy disruption.

The guidance will assist you in planning for a disruption to an electricity and petroleum Oil supply as you:

- Identify factors in planning for disruption to the fuel and energy supply in the health service
- Identify areas where HSE managers should review their contingency planning
- Develop and implement contingency for essential supplies, alternative sourcing and backup power
- Increase staff awareness of contingency arrangements, including roles and responsibilities.

Two scenarios should be considered to assist in planning and preparing for a response, namely:

Disruption to electricity supplies

As a result of constraints on the supply of Gas for electricity production, there is a risk of controlled demand reduction or “brownouts” consisting of planned Rota power cuts for periods of up to four hours at a time.

Disruptions to the supply of petroleum Oil

Where supplies of Road Diesel and Home Heating Oil become constrained, the Minister for Environment Climate and Communications has the option to activate the Oil Emergency Allocation Scheme (OEAS). There is a risk of interruptions to the diesel and fuel supply for vehicles, heating and generators.

Energy Disruption

The following areas should be considered in the planning and preparedness for the impacts associated with a period of energy disruption. This Guidance is not prescriptive or restrictive and allows for managers to include all aspects that they deem relevant to their service. COVID-19 guidance, requirements and impacts need to be incorporated in all areas of services planning and preparing for periods of energy disruption.

1 Designation of Responsibility

Each service manager should assign responsibility to a senior staff member and a designate to ensure their service has planned for and prepared for the impacts of a period of energy disruption.

2 Cross Check of Plans

The review of energy disruption considerations should take place as part of each services overall Severe Weather planning and preparedness.

3 Risk Assessment

To prepare effectively for dealing with potential periods of Energy Disruption, it is necessary to consider specific risks associated with impacts of a power outage or a disruption to fuel supply. This should be undertaken as part of your overall Severe Weather and Winter Planning Risk assessment.

4 Identified Energy Disruption risks and impacts for the HSE

Disruption to electricity supplies as a result of constraints on the supply of Gas for electricity production.

Disruptions to the supply of petroleum fuel, in particular, Road Diesel and Home Heating Oil.

Impacts: The provision of Health Services could be disrupted in several ways.

Due consideration is required and contingency planning in the following areas:

- Loss of power to HSE estate leading to a failure of Heat and Lighting, and/or damage to equipment including all electronic medical diagnostic equipment, ICT devices, Security Systems, Fire Safety Systems, Refrigerated Storage, communications, provision of heat and light, Lifts, hoists, bed adjustments, payment systems, car parking systems, catering and sanitation and hygiene.
- Restrictions of fuel supply leading to delays in refuelling HSE vehicles, restricted availability of fuel to suppliers of goods and services to the HSE, limitations and delays to the supply of bulk fuel oil to HSE estate with a consequential risk of loss of capacity for heating and/or provision of alternative power source through standby generators.
- Limitations on fuel supply for private vehicles leading to challenges for health staff in attending at workplaces and an increased reliance on public transport.
- Impacts on vulnerable service users due to loss of power and/or heat with consequential impacts on HSE supplied medical aids such as Hoists, Dialysis, E Health systems, O2 Concentrators, etc.

5 Mitigation Measures – Energy Supply Restrictions

Exemption categories

There are some exemption categories identified for *"services essential to the maintenance of vital societal functions, health, safety, security, economic or social wellbeing of society"* (Strategic Emergency Management Guideline 3 - Version 2 – Critical Infrastructure Resilience 2021). For health, this includes:

- HSE acute hospital sites should be prioritised to maintain supply during controlled demand reduction, but supply cannot be guaranteed.
- a list of seventy acute sites (public, voluntary and private) has been sent to the ESB.
- this list does not currently include community sites such as long-term residential facilities, mental health facilities or disability facilities.
- all sites may be subject to power cuts for up to 4 hours at a time as a result of controlled demand reduction.
- Where residential sites experience an interruption to electrical supply due to a fault or weather-related incident, they should report it immediately to ESB Networks on 1800 372 999. You should clearly inform ESBN if you have vulnerable patients on site.
- You can check https://powercheck.esbnetworks.ie/ for updates on outages.

6 Mitigation Measures – Disruption to Petroleum Oil Supplies

7 Oil emergency allocation scheme

- In a fuel supplies emergency, a whole of Government response will be implemented. This is legislated under the Oil Emergency Allocation Scheme (OEAS) – (Fuel Control of Supplies Act 1971).
- This enables oil companies to prioritise bulk fuel deliveries to sites operating emergency services (ES) and critical services (CS). CS sectors, sub-sectors and activities will be designated by Minister (Minister Ryan DECC). This will include priority HSE sites.
- To provide ES, CS and HSE-badged vehicles with predictable fuel requirements, DCSS can activate approximately 100 designated critical service stations. A limited capacity will be available to workers needing road fuel to carry out critical functions.

National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA)

- Oil provides over 50% of Ireland's day-to-day energy needs.
- Under National Oil Reserves Agency Act 2007 (NORA), Ireland must maintain a minimum 90 days' oil supply to meet its EU and International Energy Agency obligations.

Each HSE service manager is asked to implement this checklist and guidance in their area of responsibility.

HSE Emergency Management Offices Contact Details

HSE National Emergency Management Office

Contact: Assistant National Director for Emergency Management

Postal Address: HSE National Office for Emergency Management, Stewarts Care Limited, Stewarts Hospital, Mill Lane, Dublin 20, D20 XT80

Email: national.em@hse.ie

Phone: 01 7785122

HSE East Major Emergency Management Office

Contact: Chief Emergency Management Officer East Region

Postal Address: Major Emergency Management Office, Phoenix Hall, St. Mary's Hospital Campus, Phoenix Park, Dublin 20, D20 CK33

Email: emergency.planning@hse.ie

Phone: 01 7959840

HSE South Emergency Management Office

Contact: Chief Emergency Management Officer South Region

Postal Address: Emergency Management Office - HSE South, Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital, Western Road, Cork, T12 WP62

Email: emo@hse.ie

Phone: 021 4921622

HSE West Emergency Management Office

Contact: Chief Emergency Management Office West Region

Postal Address: Regional Emergency Management Unit, Clinical and Administrative Building, Block A, Merlin Park Hospital, Old Dublin Road, Galway, H91N973

Email: emergency.managementwest@hse.ie

Phone: 091 775933

Appendix I - Links to useful information

Area	Link
HSE Public Health	http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/publichealth/publichealthdepts/
HSE Environmental Health	http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/environ/
HSE Risk Assessment Tool	HSE Risk Assessment Tool
Health & Safety Authority: Considerations from the HSA on challenges of Severe Weather	http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Winter_Readiness/
Winter Ready	http://winterready.ie/
Major Emergency Management	www.MEM.ie
Met Eireann	https://www.met.ie/weather-warnings
Eircodes	https://www.eircode.ie/
Other	www.flooding.ie https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/environmentandhealth/climateandhealth/

HSE National Emergency Management Office,
Stewarts Care Limited,
Stewarts Hospital, Mill Lane,
Dublin 20, D20 XT80

HSE.ie