

Create a Fair, Functional Winter Weather Policy for your Workplace

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Bitter cold, dangerous ice, piles of snow... Extreme winter weather conditions can disrupt the workplace and your [business success](#). Whether you're a small business owner or [human resources manager](#), make sure you have a fair and useful winter weather policy at the ready for employees. Here's what you need to know.



Remember the Law

The [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) dictates whether a company is obligated to pay employees if the business is closed due to inclement weather, says Jason Carney, HR director of [WorkSmart Systems](#).

Under the FLSA, employers are not required to pay non-exempt employees for time in which no work was performed. Some states, however, have "report-in pay" laws, which say some non-exempt employees must be paid if they make it to work and are later sent home.

Exempt employees must almost always be paid for the entire day if they are sent home.

Reflect your Company Culture

Once you're familiar with the law, put together a policy that reflects your [company culture](#) and branding, says [Charles Krugel](#), a management-side labor and employment lawyer.

"If you're the US Post Office, then your policy should be 'neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow.'" A hard-driving, aggressive organization that's big on face time will probably have a different policy than a family-oriented organization or one that prides itself on [workplace flexibility](#).

Keep your Entire Workforce in Mind

On the other hand, adds Krugel, if you have a diverse workforce that works in a variety of areas, a one-size-fits-all policy probably isn't appropriate.

Cathy Ramos, human resources manager for [LASIO Inc.](#), agrees. She recommends keeping in mind logistics that employees may be dealing with, such as travel distance, method of travel and caregiving responsibilities. Keep in mind workplace flexibility.

"Include a clear plan of action that takes into consideration business needs, but most importantly, employee safety," she says.

Define 'Bad Weather'

Determine what the cutoff for your organization will be. "Is it a certain amount of snow, is it when city officials announce unsafe travel conditions or is it when city schools are closed?" Ramos says.

Have a Plan of Action

Be explicit in your weather policy and include expectations about what employees should do in different scenarios, Ramos says.

“Bad-weather policies should include what is expected from an employee in case bad weather results in unsafe travel conditions or school closures, which often impacts employee attendance. It should allot for work that can be completed from home and clearly communicate when an employee can expect to receive an email or phone call on business closure.”

Most importantly, it should clearly lay out the roles and responsibility of the people who prepare the company for bad weather, which would include notifying employees, setting up automated messages, alerting customers and establishing virtual access to the office, she says.

Put Safety First

Carney recommends managers be flexible with arrival times when the weather is bad and encourage safe driving among employees. “Allow working from home as an option if weather is severe, and keep office morale high by offering a relaxed dress code policy,” he says.