

Major Disruption to Travel - Guidance

Introduction

Major disruption to travel is disruption which impacts on public transport or roads to the extent that it prevents or seriously affects a significant number of employees' efforts to come to and from work. This includes impacts arising from events such as severe weather, other natural disasters, national travel strikes, or other major incidents.

Major disruption to travel can be planned or unplanned. It is important where potential major disruption to travel is known about in advance that managers and employees pro-actively plan what alternative working and/or travelling arrangements may be possible.

It is important in the event of unplanned major disruption to travel that managers and employees keep in touch and work together to reach an appropriate solution.

Aim

The aim of this guidance is to set out the broad principles that apply for attendance at work during major disruption to travel, including disruption due to severe weather. It does not seek to cover all eventualities, and line managers are afforded some flexibility to determine whether or not it is reasonable for staff to travel to or remain in work. It does not supersede any guidance that may be issued prior to or during an episode of major travel disruption and/or severe weather.

Principles

The following principles underpin the Major Disruption to Travel guidance:

- Employees have a responsibility to attend work and should make every effort to do so but personal safety is the most important consideration and employees are not expected to take unnecessary risks.
- Where employees are unable to attend because there is major transport disruption due to severe weather, they should continue to attempt to use public transport as soon as the weather eases or walk to work if at all feasible and safe if they are within walking distance (see below) of the normal work base.
- Employees who are affected by major travel disruption will be treated fairly and principles will be applied consistently wherever possible.
- Line managers must only give time credits if there are road closures en route to the office or a prolonged interruption to public transport and all options for the employee to carry out alternative useful work have been considered and ruled out.

- Employees should attend for work at another Welsh Government office if possible but are not required to report for work at the offices of other government Departments.

Guidance

This guidance applies when an employee's ability to safely attend or remain at their usual place of work is affected by major disruption to travel, including severe weather. The principles of this guidance will also apply to business travel. The guidance covers all employees, including those on temporary appointments and on loan from other Civil Service departments.

The guidance provides a framework for dealing with major disruption to travel and recognises that some local arrangements and procedures may be needed.

The guidance does **not** cover disruption to caring arrangements, e.g. impact arising from school or day care centre closures. This should be managed using the [Special Leave policy](#).

Where main travel arteries are open, employees should also consider specific local travel difficulties on a case by case basis – for example, although main roads may be open and accessible, local routes close to the employee's home may not be.

Where, as a result of severe weather, an employee is able to attend work but their journey time is **significantly** extended (for instance because they cannot travel by car but can make it via public transport), they should only claim the time that they are actually at work and should take flexi or annual leave for the time to make up the normal working day.

Line managers can consider awarding time credits to offset the extension or the missed part of the working day based on the route the employee has taken and the availability of transport on that route. This is in line with the working hours policy.

Employees attending work during episodes of severe weather should ensure that they wear warm clothes and sensible shoes.

Walking to work

Employees are required if necessary to walk a distance of up to four miles to work, depending on the terrain and weather conditions, and their age, physique and general fitness. However, if the travel disruption is due to severe weather, it is unlikely that any member of staff would be expected to walk any significant distance to work, unless they could walk safely to a Welsh Government office close to home in an area not severely affected by the weather.

Deteriorating weather during office hours

If weather conditions deteriorate during office hours, line managers should consult with heads of branch and Deputy Directors to determine whether employees should be allowed to go home early before transport conditions

deteriorate. It may be practical for employees to take work home in such circumstances.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are expected to perform their usual role or carry out appropriate alternative work. They are also expected to attend their usual place of work unless alternative arrangements are agreed with their line manager.

If an employee determines that they are unable to attend for work because of severe weather, it is their responsibility to alert their line manager. If an employee determines that although transport links are not sufficiently disrupted to prevent their travelling to work, they would prefer not to do so, they must take annual leave and must obtain their line manager's permission in the normal way.

Employees should continue to keep in touch with their line manager throughout any period of disruption so that the situation can be kept under review and alternative options considered.

Line Manager Responsibilities

When an employee has made contact with the line manager, the line manager must discuss any potential obstacles preventing them travelling to and from their usual place of work. The manager should explore with the employee practical alternative ways of travelling to minimise loss of working time.

A number of factors should be considered when deciding on the most appropriate course of action. Managers must consider potential health and safety risks, the nature of the disruption and the individual's personal circumstances. This must include individual employee needs such as disabilities that may make alternative means of travel more difficult.

Alternative working arrangements

Line Managers should discuss options with their employees for alternative working arrangements such as:

- Changing the timing of the journey to or from work.
- Working from alternative premises subject to the line manager's approval, local security arrangements and business continuity arrangements.
- Working from home – please refer to the [Homeworking policy](#).
- Discussing longer term plans that may not have been possible at short notice where the disruption is expected to last for several days (or longer).
- Whilst every effort should be made to reach a mutually acceptable agreement, it is ultimately an employee's line manager who should decide on the most appropriate course of action in any particular circumstance.

Leave and pay arrangements

Where alternative working arrangements are not possible the line manager should discuss:

- Whether the employee wishes to take annual leave or flexi leave. Employees may take annual leave or flexi leave rather than keep trying to get into work when it is difficult to do so. This should be done with the agreement of their line manager who should consider business continuity when agreeing leave.
- Whether any working time lost can be made up at a later date.
- In exceptional circumstances, where an employee's line manager is satisfied that the employee has made every reasonable effort to come into work but has been unable to do so, line managers may consider awarding paid time credits/paid special leave. This should only be up to the employee's normal working pattern for that day.

Managing absence

When an employee does not attend work and/or no contact has been made the line manager must follow the procedure for unauthorised absence. Please refer to the [Attendance Management policy](#).