**Managing Health and Safety in Cold Weather**

We are obviously in the season where cold weather is forecast. Such weather brings concerns involving snow and / or ice, and schools are reminded to include this as part of their Health and Safety and business continuity planning. Consider how the weather may affect the operation of your school, e.g., transport difficulties getting to and from the school and availability of staff and other services. You may also have evening meetings where visitors are present at the school.

**All schools need to ensure that there is a risk assessment and procedures which cover the hazards associated with snow and ice on their premises and how these hazards are being controlled.** It may be useful for schools to map out on a blank plan of the school, the areas on which to grit or cordon off. Share this information with all staff.

Resources should be allocated to clearing the most used areas on your premises in priority to those less used. Gritting twice a day, early in the morning and in the early evening is likely to be most practicable, but individual circumstances may vary. Do not forget fire evacuation routes and consider staff sick leave when allocating duties to grit / clear snow. Appropriate checks should be made to ensure continued safety once areas have been gritted. Consider external pathways, circulation routes, playgrounds, staff car parks, etc. It may be appropriate for some affected areas to be taken out of use. If this is the case, it must be marked clearly using signs / cones / tape, to ensure staff, children, parents, visitors etc, are made aware, and cannot enter. Ensure that this message is clearly communicated and that parents / carers are aware of the need for extra vigilance when it comes to bringing younger siblings onto the premises (i.e., pick up and drop off times). Consider anyone with special requirements. You may want to use your school’s text messaging service to spread the word about ice and snow, and the areas which have or have not been gritted.

If the playground remains in use, supervision levels ***may*** need to be increased. Any particularly dangerous areas which require extra care should be checked or treated more frequently, e.g., steps, slopes, hidden gullies etc.

**All staff should be made aware of the risk assessment in place for snow and ice** and take responsibility for following the designated paths and access routes when such conditions exist. Employees should be reminded of their duty under section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to take care of their own safety, and other peoples’, particularly when moving about in slippery conditions.

An additional frequent hazard is the slippery floors caused by people bringing in water and slush on their shoes. Extra care with doormats and floor cleaning will help reduce this hazard.

If you are the one who is gritting, take care of your own health and safety. Wear sturdy gripping boots, and appropriate winter clothing if you are out early or late. Ensure if you are on your own on the site and gritting in the evening, that there is a ‘buddy’ system in place and that you call someone when you are leaving the school, to tell them you are safe. Make sure you use appropriate tools for the job and that you follow manual handling guidance as required.

This guidance may feel quite generic to you in terms of not having a ‘definitive’ answer to where you should, or should not grit on your premises. Each school is best placed to know their own establishment, and consultation with staff on this matter will help. Plan and consider that bad weather WILL happen in the winter months, and be prepared.

Please report all slips, trips and falls with regard to icy conditions to Nina Bickerton, SCC Schools’ Health and Safety Advisor at nina.bickerton@suffolk.gov.uk , using the appropriate form at <https://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/leadership-staff-development/health-safety-wellbeing/incident-reporting> . Please contact Nina for any further advice. **HSE information can be found here:** [**http://www.hse.gov.uk/logistics/slips-trips-bad-weather.htm**](http://www.hse.gov.uk/logistics/slips-trips-bad-weather.htm)