

Extreme Temperatures Corporate Policy & Guidance

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Links and Dependencies
Management of health and Safety at Work Regulations
Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations

1. Introduction

It is not known specifically how many accidents occur at work each year as a result of exposure to extremes of temperature. The fact remains, however, that temperature extremes can at times be uncomfortable, debilitating and have adverse effects on employees' health and safety.

Staff can be exposed to adverse temperature conditions through a number of occupational activities. The degree of exposure is dependent on several inter-related factors. These factors include the work activity being performed, the type of work equipment used, the working environment, individual physical characteristics and other factors such as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). For example, those who work outdoors are particularly vulnerable to cold temperatures in the winter months, whilst in hot summer periods staff who work in kitchens may be particularly at risk.

Whilst the cause of extreme temperatures (e.g. weather) cannot be controlled, there are actions which can be taken to reduce extreme temperature effects.

Consideration and evaluation of all these factors is essential in developing safe systems of work which incorporate adequate preventative/control measures.

2. Policy Statement

The Council undertakes to reduce to the lowest level reasonably practicable, the risk to health and safety of its employees and members of the public visiting its premises, through:-

- undertaking risk assessments to identify work places and activities which may expose employees and others to extremes of temperature.
- developing safe systems of work and introducing practical measures to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.
- providing adequate information, instruction and training to relevant employees.
- providing PPE which is compatible with the environment in which it is worn.

- ❑ providing, so far as is reasonably practicable, additional heating/cooling equipment (portable fans and heaters) where required.
- ❑ allowing staff to dress appropriately for the environment in which they work.
- ❑ providing sufficient amounts of drinking water.
- ❑ ensuring that all serious accidents caused by extremes of temperature are investigated by a 'competent' person and preventative measures implemented.

3. Managers' Guidelines

Because of the varied nature of premises and activities undertaken within the Council, it is impossible to prescribe definite temperatures other than those in specific legislation mentioned below.

- **Statutory Requirements**

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act does not specifically deal with extremes of temperature, however, the Council has a legal duty under Section 2 of this Act 'to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees' and clearly this interpreted in the broadest sense extends to exposure to extremes of temperature.

More specific duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require the Council to consider the hazards associated with working in temperature extremes, assessing the risk in such circumstances and implementing appropriate preventative measures.

There are other pieces of legislation which give specific guidance on temperature. Below is a summary of their main requirements:-

Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

Sedentary workers	16°C minimum
Physical work	13°C minimum

The provision of a sufficient number of thermometers.

(No maximum temperature is defined)

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations

Employers have the responsibility to ensure that workstations do not produce excessive heat which could cause discomfort.

Manual Handling Operations Regulations

Employers have a responsibility to take into account the working environment when carrying out assessments.

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations

Employers should ensure that the selection of PPE takes account of the working environment with respect to extremes of heat and cold to ensure that it does not adversely affect the user.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

Requires that employers take into account the risks to employees from extremes of temperature. (Specific reference is made to pregnant and breastfeeding employees)

- **Comfort Variables**

Despite the fact that 'comfort' is a personal state, agreement is usually found whenever a group of people are asked to assess a given atmospheric condition. Research indicates that there are four factors which are chiefly responsible for the sensation, namely:-

Air Temperature

This is the most important factor and depends upon the type of work being undertaken. As physical activity increases, so the optimum ambient temperature reduces.

Radiant Heat

It is important to regulate exposure to radiated heat. Wherever possible, temperature gradients should be negative ie cool head, warm feet.

Relative Humidity (dryness or dampness of the air)

It is generally accepted that the relative humidity (RH) should be between 40 - 70%.

If the relative humidity is low, and the air is 'dry' a feeling of discomfort is produced due to the drying of the throat, eyes and nasal passages. If it is high, then there is a feeling of 'stuffiness' and a reduction in the rate at which sweat evaporates, thereby reducing the body's ability to keep cool.

Air Movement

This is an important factor. If there is excessive movement of air, then people complain of draughts. If there is no movement the room feels airless.

The sensation of air movement is directly related to air temperature and skin sensitivity.

If the air is cool, even slight draughts are detectable (wind chill factor). Air movements eg desk fans, assist in cooling the body but can cause distress if excessive.

Other factors which may affect thermal comfort include physical exertion, length of time exposed, clothing, general health and personal protective equipment required to be worn.

• Reporting Procedures/Actions

It is important that if extremes of temperature are causing unnecessary physical discomfort or have caused an accident or injury at work, they should be reported immediately through the normal procedures for health and safety issues:-

ie either on a defect report form or through the Incident Reporting form.

If the problems persist, then the Departmental Health and Safety Section should be contacted in order to investigate further and suggest any remedial action which may be taken to reduce the problem.

4. Employees' Guidelines

If you find that extremes of temperature (hot or cold) are causing you unnecessary physical discomfort or have caused an accident or injury at work, then you should report this immediately to your line manager.

If you are issued with personal protective equipment to protect you against extreme temperatures, then you must use them and report any defects in this equipment to your line manager so that you may obtain a replacement.

5. Practical

- **Control Measures**

Hot temperatures

	Action taken by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a risk assessment of the workplace/activity. Special consideration should be given to pregnant/breastfeeding employees and staff who undertake physical/heavy work. 	Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase ventilation eg desk fans, open windows and doors to create air movement. 	Management/ Employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove radiant heat by using blinds, reflective film, work in the shade, move workstations away from windows. 	Management/ Employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide local cooling units where practicable, including dehumidifiers. 	Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure air conditioning units are serviced regularly and operated correctly. 	Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take breaks from physical activity to allow the body to cool down. 	Employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cool drinks where practicable. 	Management/ Employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sun block where appropriate. 	Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover up in the sunshine and wear a hat. 	Employee

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear sensible cool, loose fitting clothes. | Action taken by:
Employee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insulate hot pipes. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn down thermostats. | Employee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Personal Protective Equipment which is suitable for hot conditions. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the length of time staff are exposed. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staff with training to recognise the health effects of heat. | Management |

Cold temperatures

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a risk assessment of the workplace/activity. Special consideration should be given to pregnant/breastfeeding workers and staff exposed to the cold for long periods. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide local heating units where practicable. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure thermostats and boilers are at winter settings. | Management/
Employee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure air conditioning units are serviced regularly and operated correctly. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide hot drinks where practicable. | Management/
Employee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear appropriate warm clothing. | Employee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Personal Protective Equipment which is suitable for cold conditions. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the length of time staff are exposed. | Management/
Employee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staff with training to recognise the health effects of exposure to cold. | Management |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take suitable breaks in a warm environment to warm up the body where practicable. | Management/
Employee |