

Inclement Weather or Hazardous Conditions

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1 – Policy Name

Inclement Weather or Hazardous Conditions Policy

2 – Purpose

Inclement weather or hazardous conditions may temporarily prevent normal availability of operations or municipal services. During these situations, Halifax Regional Municipality will consider the importance of service delivery in conjunction with employee safety. The purpose of this Policy is to provide clear work expectations for non-union employees during inclement weather or hazardous conditions, which may create difficult and dangerous travel and work conditions or interfere with the normal business operations of the Municipality.

3 – Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are:

- To establish a system for determining responsibility for decisions to close or reduce municipal operations.
- To clarify role responsibilities during municipal office closures or delayed openings.
- To apply consistency in the administration process for employees who miss time due to inclement weather or hazardous conditions.
- To outline the communication protocol for temporary municipal office closures.

4 – Scope

This Policy applies to non-union employees only. Unionized employees should refer to the conditions stated in their collective agreements.

5 – Definitions

In the context of this document:

Business Unit Continuity Plan means a strategic plan for maintaining essential services during inclement weather or hazardous conditions.

Closure means non-essential services are halted and non-essential workplaces are closed due to inclement weather or hazardous conditions. During a closure, non-essential employees do not have to come to work for the closure period.

Delayed Opening means postponing the start of work until later in the day, for non-essential services and workplaces, due to inclement weather or hazardous conditions. During a delayed opening, non-essential employees are not required to come to work until the time stated in the delayed opening announcement.

Employee means any non-union person employed by the Municipality, categorized as: permanent, term, part-time, casual, contract, seasonal, temporary or student.

Essential Service means a service, facility or activity of the Municipality that is necessary to ensure the safety and security of the public or the continued operation of critical municipal services. Halifax Regional Municipality essential services and positions are defined by each business unit.

Inclement Weather means severe or harsh environmental conditions that can include: snowstorms, blizzards, ice storms, hurricanes, tornados, flooding, wild fires or any unforeseen act of nature.

Hazardous Conditions means temporary situations that could cause harm, often accompanied by power outages, road and highway advisories, police advisories or public safety statements from the Emergency Management Office or other similar agencies.

State of Emergency means an abnormal situation that requires prompt action, beyond normal procedures, to minimize damages to persons, property or the environment. This includes a real or anticipated occurrence which endangers or is likely to endanger the safety, welfare, and well-being of some or all of the population, either in the Municipality or the Province.

6 – Roles and Responsibilities

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

The CAO is responsible for:

- Consulting with relevant stakeholders to collect necessary information for making a closure or delayed opening decision.
- Making the decision to close or delay openings of municipal offices or reduce operations in the event of extreme inclement weather or hazardous conditions.
- Conveying the closure or delay decision to Corporate Communications to initiate communications support.
- Distributing a special bulletin email to the organization.
- Ensuring the fair and consistent application of the Policy across all business units.
- Monitoring the effectiveness and consistent application of this Policy.

Executive/Managing Directors

Executive/Managing Directors are responsible for:

- Maintaining an up-to-date Business Unit Continuity Plan for essential services provided by their business unit.
- Designating essential services and identifying required staff in the Business Unit Continuity Plan.
- Ensuring their management staff are familiar with this Policy and are applying it fairly and consistently with their employees.
- Receiving confirmation of delayed openings or closures from the CAO, via Corporate Communications, and subsequently advising all applicable staff by email or phone call and providing instructions as necessary.
- Consulting with Human Resources for additional guidance as needed.

Directors/Managers/Supervisors

Directors/Managers/Supervisors are responsible for:

- Ensuring their staff is informed about the Policy and responding to questions about procedures for an inclement weather or hazardous conditions situation.
- Applying the Policy fairly and consistently with their staff.
- Instructing employees, whose duties include travel, as to whether they should continue on or return to the office.
- Promptly advising staff when office delayed openings, closures or cancellations occur and providing instructions as necessary.
- Considering requests for leave alternatives or flexible work arrangements from employees, in non-essential positions, who feel it is unsafe for them to travel to the workplace.
- Ensuring essential employees are aware of their designation and requirement to report to work during delayed openings or closures.
- Contributing to their Business Unit Continuity Plan for essential services.
- Consulting with Human Resources for additional Policy guidance as needed.

Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this Policy.
- Checking the office closure information line (902-490-3133 or toll free 1-844-490-3133), visiting @hfxgov or halifax.ca/snow, or checking their work email for a special bulletin to determine whether a Halifax Regional Municipality office delayed opening, closure or cancellation advisory has been issued.
- Contacting their director/manager/supervisor if they are unclear about how the delayed opening, office closure or cancellation may affect them.
- Reporting to the workplace when no office delay or closure has been issued and they feel it is safe to do so.

- Requesting and being prepared for an applicable leave alternative or flexible work arrangement when they feel it is unsafe to travel to the workplace.

Corporate Communications

Corporate Communications is responsible for:

- Drafting a special bulletin for the organization.
- Updating the office closure information line (902-490-3133 or toll free 1-844-490-3133) regarding office opening delays, closures or cancellations.
- Sending public service announcements to relevant media outlets and posting on internal and external municipal social media channels.
- Monitoring status of public service levels with relevant business units.

Human Resources

Human Resources is responsible for:

- Maintaining the Policy.
- Providing information and advice about the Policy.
- Providing guidance and support when the Policy is not followed, and discipline is required.

7 – Policy Regulations

Unless declared closed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), all municipal offices remain open during inclement weather or hazardous conditions. In the event of a delayed opening or closure, services deemed essential by the CAO will continue to operate. When the CAO requires continuation of essential services, applicable Executive Directors and Managing Directors will implement their Business Unit's Continuity Plan.

Absences when Municipal Offices are Open

Employees are expected to make every effort to report for duty and remain at work during their scheduled working hours. The Municipality recognizes that inclement weather or hazardous conditions may create concerns for employees with respect to attendance at work and they must use their own judgment in determining whether it is safe to travel.

If an employee is unable to report for work because of inclement weather or hazardous conditions, they may request the time be drawn from applicable leave options, such as vacation. Employees who have banked time, may use this option to make up for time lost due to inclement weather or hazardous conditions. If the employee has no leave time available, the time off may be considered as unpaid leave, or if agreeable to the employee's supervisor, alternative arrangements can be utilized to make up for the time. In all cases, employees are required to contact their supervisor, or follow other established procedures, if they are unable to report to work.

Unapproved Essential Services Absences when Municipal Offices are Closed

Unless an approved absence is granted by their supervisor, employees designated by their business units as essential staff, will not be paid if they do not report to work during weather events or hazardous conditions. Employees will not be paid for the day if the absence amounts to a full day. If the absence amounts to a half-day or less, they will be paid for one half-day.

If a municipal operation is shut down due to inclement weather or hazardous conditions after an employee has reported to work, the employee will not suffer any loss of pay as a result of the closure. Employees who are required to remain at work will continue to be paid at their regular rate of pay for the hours worked.

Compliance

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

8 – Repeal

Replaces the Inclement Weather policy last revised December 13, 2006.

9 – Effective Date

August 12, 2021

10 – Related Policies and Practices

Vacation Leave
Purchased Leave
Emergency Leave
Leave for Government-declared Emergency
Flexible Work Arrangements

11 – Policy Review

Review every 2 years.

12 – Contact

Human Resources Business Partner.

13 – Attachments

N/A