**EXTREME TEMPERATURES IN THE WORKPLACE**

June 2019

## Purpose

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require employers to provide a safe place of work. This includes the provision of a reasonable temperature in all workplaces during working hours.

The advice note below has been prepared so that measures taken by Directorates to reduce the problems of extreme heat/cold in the workplace are applied consistently throughout the Council, so far as is practicable.

The basic requirement contained within the Workplace Regulations is to provide a reasonable temperature in the workplace. This means a temperature which provides a reasonable level of thermal comfort without the need for special clothing. Where this is not possible, because of hot or cold processes which take place in the work area, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a temperature which is, as close as possible, to comfortable.

The maximum limit in the guidance gives a trigger of 28 degrees celsius maximum. In the notes below (item no. 4) it explains how this trigger should be used. Safety and / or employee representatives must be invited by local managers to discuss measures that will be used to counter temperature extremes before the trigger is reached. It adds that where the maximum limit is breached staff are not automatically, sent home.

These notes are not intended to be the definitive answer to all the questions that usually arise, but are aimed at setting a framework for Directorates to use. Each workplace (including those outdoors) will have specific problems and it would not be possible to cover them all.

Some of the advice may seem obvious, but the experiences of the Health and Safety Team show that most of the enquiries received during hot and cold spells are fairly basic.

## Preparatory Work

In advance of extreme weather conditions employing Directorates should consult with local Safety Representatives and establish:

2.1 what problems are likely to be met in each building / workplace, based on previous experience.

2.2 which employees or groups of employees are most likely to be affected. (See item 3).

2.3 whether the existing heating / ventilation arrangements will cope with extreme temperatures.

2.4 what suitable alternatives / supplements are there and where can they be obtained (see item 5).

2.5 whether a temporary review of working practices would alleviate the problem.

In addition, Directorates should consider the use of flexi-leave, and the use of extended breaks during working hours. Opportunity should be given to allow staff to book Annual Leave at short notice whenever possible. However this should not be used as a means to impose the use of Annual Leave (or Flexi-leave) in order to avoid taking other action. Managers can also consider provision of home working where possible.

## Employees most likely to be affected

3.1 Certain groups of employees, by the very nature of their job, are able to reduce the impact of extreme weather conditions by changing work patterns e.g. arranging site visits / meetings, restructuring their work to allow regular breaks for fresh air/ “warm up" activity, or being able to take flexi-leave at short notice.

Other employees are not always able to do this e.g:

• Receptionist / Cashiers

• Office based employees

• Certain administrative staff

• Kitchen staff

• Boiler room attendants

• Swimming pool attendants

• School based employees

Note: This list is not exhaustive.

Employees with specific disabilities are particularly vulnerable and can suffer discomfort during hot and cold spells due to restricted mobility.

3.2 In addition, there are employees who need to wear protective clothing, gloves, etc. in situations where very high temperatures would cause problems. In such cases Directorates should consider rescheduling the work to different times (e.g. early morning or late afternoon) or if this is not practical, to break the work down into shorter periods during high temperatures.

3.3 It is important that the groups of employees most likely to be affected are identified and given preference when supplementary heating / ventilation is being considered. Too often, staff sit in draughty reception areas, while elsewhere in the building, empty offices are being heated, simply because there is no agreed policy for determining priority groups.

## “Trigger” temperature

4.1 It has been agreed by the Council and all the Trades Unions to have an agreement regarding “trigger temperature”.

4.2 The two “trigger” temperatures that have been agreed are as follows:

28ºC (82ºF) - Maximum

17ºC (64ºF) - Minimum (although there is a legal minimum temperature this trigger temperature was agreed).

When these temperatures are recorded in a workplace, local Management must discuss with local safety representatives and /or Employee Side Health & Safety Officer, and the Corporate Health and Safety Team, the measures proposed to reduce the effects on employees, if these discussions have not already taken place.

In other words, generally some action would be expected before those temperatures had been reached, but once the trigger point is reached employing Directorates must take some action.

4.3 It should be emphasised that the two trigger temperatures are not to be used as the signal for sending employees home - merely as a defined position to open local discussions.

## Supplementary heating / ventilation

5.1 If Directorates decide to provide supplementary heating or ventilation, they must consult with the Corporate Contracts Team (Corporate Landlord) before doing so. This is one area where pre-planning is really essential to ensure that any additional heating or cooling equipment can be obtained in good time.

5.2 Records should be kept to identify problem areas / workplaces so that this information can be used to assist with pre-planning, and/or refurbishment and building works where temperatures have been a problem.

5.3 A record should also be kept of what approved supplementary heating or ventilation equipment has been provided so that:-

a) Equipment can be returned for appropriate storage and maintenance, so that it is available for future use.

b) Any “unofficial” equipment can be identified.

## Consultation

6.1 At all stages, there should be regular contact with Corporate Contracts Team (Corporate Landlord), Building or Site Managers, local Safety Representatives and / or Employee Side Health & Safety Officer and the Corporate Health and Safety Team to advise:

a) whether the problems are short term (e.g. boiler failure)

b) what measures are being taken to alleviate the general problems

c) any specific areas of concern.

## Policy decisions

7. 1 Local management and supervisors will need to know who they go to if the measures they are taking are not successful. At some point, there may be pressure to send employees home.

Any such decision rests with individual Directors as they will have all the facts relating to the particular workplace problem. In the event, a Director does decide to send employees home, a brief note of the numbers involved and the reasons should be sent to the Chief Executive. Obviously if there are large numbers involved, or it affects a particularly sensitive area a phone call would be appropriate.

## Monitoring and Review

8. 1 A variety of monitoring systems must be utilised to ensure adherence with this agreement, including departmental monitoring checks.

8.2 This agreement must be reviewed yearly and revised as soon as practicable where changes in statute or best practice deem the content out of date.

## Approval

8. 1 This agreement was reviewed by the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board and approved by the Council’s Head of Organisational Resilience on 8th August, 2019. Any required variations should be brought to the attention of the Council’s Head of Organisational Resilience.

Approved by (print name): Andrew Meek

Signature Date: 12/11/2019

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