

3.17 POLICY

Extreme Weather

Policy statement

Reach is committed to providing a safe working environment and recognises its duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of its staff, crew, supporters, volunteers, participants and other people in its workplaces.

Extreme weather conditions may make it difficult, and in some cases unsafe, for people working on Reach business or attending Reach programs to get to or from their destination or to conduct Reach programs as originally planned. This policy provides guidance about how different extreme weather scenarios will be handled.

DOCUMENT CONTROL			
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Related documentation

3.01 OHS Policy
3.09 Working Outdoors Policy

Definitions

Extreme weather – weather which due to its severity makes it unsafe or unreasonable for an employee to travel/work. Examples include heavy rain and storms, bushfires, extreme heat or cold, hail or high winds according to the local Bureau of Meteorology report (BOM).

Natural disaster – a natural event such as a flood, earthquake, or hurricane that causes great damage or loss of life.

Stand down – when an employee's work is cancelled or they are released from the workplace because they can't do useful work due to:

- Extreme weather or natural disasters
- Equipment break down, if the employer is not responsible for it
- Industrial action, when it's not organised by the employer
- Other conditions that the employer can't be held responsible for and which make working unsafe or unfeasible, including Government-instructed restrictions on travel or group gatherings.

Shut down – when a business temporarily closes during slow periods of the year, such as Christmas and New Year. A shut down is also known as a close down.

State government emergency – an emergency situation in which a government is empowered to perform actions or impose policies that it would normally not be permitted to undertake.

Operating principles

Reach work is conducted at many locations including Reach offices, school campuses, campsites and buildings in metro, regional towns and rural areas. In conditions of severe weather it is possible that Reach workers and/or participants could be faced with dangerous conditions:

- In travelling to/from home and the Reach office
- in travelling from the Reach office to an offsite destination
- at the destination (Reach office)
- at the destination (other location)
- in travelling back to the Reach office at the end of the work or program.

Due to the nature of Reach's work, this policy also addresses the difference between working at one of the Reach offices, at another location in the metropolitan area, and running programs in a regional or rural location, requiring longer travel distances and greater potential risks due to exposure to extreme weather conditions.

1. Continue operating unless not safe to do so

- 1.1 It is Reach's policy to continue operating during most weather conditions as long as it is safe to do so. However, in scenarios where extraordinary circumstances occur that present a risk to the safety of Reach workers and/or participants, appropriate measures should be taken to protect them.
- 1.2 Judgement needs to be applied when considering the risks associated with travelling and working in any location during extreme weather. Every situation will be different and needs to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

2. Normal place of work (Reach office) - not involving program delivery

- 2.1 During periods of extreme weather, all employees are expected to attend their normal place of work, unless instructed not to do so by their manager, or in agreement with their manager based on the circumstances (see Alternative places of work and Leave arrangements below).
- 2.2 Giving due regard to health and safety, employees should consider whether it is appropriate to adjust their means of transport (where available) to make their travel to the Reach office safer.
- 2.3 Employees should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather. It may be sensible to bring a change of clothes to ensure they are appropriately dressed once at work.
- 2.4 If an employee's travel to the Reach office is delayed due to extreme weather, they should advise their manager of the issue and give their best estimate of their arrival time. If further delays occur, the employee should provide updates to their manager. Text messaging or calling the manager is the preferred approach.
- 2.5 Employees whose situation makes attending their normal place of work unsafe or excessively difficult are encouraged to work elsewhere (see Alternative places of work below). If they do not want to do this, they are required to take leave.
- 2.6 Under all circumstances managers must ensure that their team is provided with an appropriate contact number, especially in circumstances where the office(s) may be closed.
- 2.7 Particular health and safety needs should be considered, and appropriate alternative arrangements made, for employees who are pregnant or who have a disability.

- 2.8 Reach may send employees home if extreme weather makes being at the office unsafe or if such recommendations or instructions have been made due to extreme weather by a Government department or agency/authority. Generally, it is recommended that employees relocate to a safe alternative place of work for the remainder of the day unless it is relatively late in the normal work day.
- 2.9 Employees who have been instructed or have their manager's agreement to work elsewhere cannot make a claim against Reach for any personal injuries or property damage they incur by attempting to arrive at their normal place of work.

3. Alternative places of work - not involving program delivery

- 3.1 Where it is impossible or unsafe for employee to attend their normal place of work, they have the option to work in an alternative place of work. This may be their home or another suitable location. Any alternative place of work must support the type of working that is required (eg, have internet access).
- 3.2 A manager may also direct employees to work in a specific location.
- 3.3 Employees working in an alternative place are expected to undertake their normal duties and to work their normal hours. There may be circumstances where the manager needs to agree adjusted or specific work-related activities to be undertaken while working in an alternative place of work.
- 3.4 Wherever possible Managers are expected to make specific arrangements with employees to ensure business continuity.

4. Leave arrangements

- 4.1 Employees who cannot attend their normal place of work or are unable to attend an alternative place of work (as directed by their manager) may choose to take annual leave, TOIL, or make an application for unpaid leave.
- 4.2 If an employee fails to discuss their situation with their manager as per 2.1 and does not attend work, this will be considered an unauthorized absence and will be treated as unpaid leave.

5. Extreme weather events during office hours

- 5.1 Should extreme weather occur during office hours, the Chief Executive and/or Chief Operating Officer will decide as to whether employees will be sent home early.
- 5.2 If an employee requests to leave work early before any formal decision has been made, their line manager will decide whether early release is warranted. In circumstances where the line manager believes early release is justified, the employee will be credited with working their standard work day.
- 5.3 If it unsafe to leave the building, employees may be directed to a place of safety within the building (refer to the Reach office emergency plan) until the extreme weather passes.
- 5.4 Reach will not be held liable for any personal injury or property damage that occurs to an employee who leaves the building after they have been directed to a place of safety within the building and if the extreme weather has not yet passed.

6. Prolonged periods of extreme weather

- 6.1 In extraordinary circumstances, adverse weather may persist over a period of several days or weeks. In such events, a member of the senior management team will provide instructions on alternative working arrangements or re-location.

7. Resuming work

- 7.1 It is envisioned that most weather disruptions to office operations will be relatively short in duration and recovery afterwards will be possible without any special arrangements.
- 7.2 Where appropriate employees will be expected to clear any backlog of work as quickly as possible upon returning to work without additional costs to Reach.

8. Damage

- 8.1 Priority will be given to control and rectify damage(s) caused to Reach facilities or equipment as a result of extreme weather.
- 8.2 Minor damages or breakdowns will be addressed as quickly as possible and employees are expected to work around such inconveniences.
- 8.3 Major damage that impacts a number of employees may result in alternative measures outlined by CEO and/or COO.

9. School program cancellation

- 9.1 As school programs occur on school premises, it is the school's responsibility to determine whether it is safe for a school program to be run or not.
- 9.2 If extreme weather results in a school deciding to cancel a program (eg, due to school closure), the payment policy to the allocated facilitator team is as follows:
- **On the day of a school workshop / series of workshops** - full rate for the workshop(s) as per their allocation for that school day
 - **With one day's notice** - minimum 3 hours
 - **With more than one day's notice** - no payment.
- 9.3 Reach reserves the right to require a casual employee who is being paid despite their program being cancelled to perform alternative work as directed.

10. Camps - extreme weather forecast

- 10.1 If extreme weather is forecasted for a period and in an area when a camp is arranged, the Program Manager will review the relevant factors, and complete a risk assessment with the camp facilitation team, taking into account the forecast weather conditions, as early as is practicable under the circumstances. The Program Manager should review the risk assessment and other relevant considerations with the upline leadership and make a decision about whether the camp will go ahead, and if so, what adjustments will be made. Such adjustments may include changing the camp's location to an area unaffected or less affected by the extreme weather and/or changing some activities (especially those that are based outdoors).
- 10.2 Camps should not be run in an area that is under Alert, Watch and Act or Emergency level warnings as issued by the relevant state fire authority.
- 10.3 If a camp is cancelled due to extreme weather, the payment policy to the allocated program team is as follows:
- **On the day of the camp** - full rate for the camp as per their role
 - **With one day's notice** - payment for 7 hours (?)
 - **With more than one day's notice** - no payment.
- 10.4 Reach reserves the right to require a casual employee who is being paid despite their program being cancelled to perform alternative work as directed.

11. Camps - extreme weather after commencement

- 11.1 If extreme weather occurs once a camp is underway, the Camp Manager is responsible for leading risk assessment and decision making regarding any appropriate adjustments and/or cancellation decisions in light of the type of weather occurring.
- 11.2 Options for safe exit and return home from the camp location should be considered, including methods of transport and the route home.
- 11.3 If a camp is cancelled due to extreme weather, the allocated program team will be paid their full rate for the camp as per their role.
- 11.4 Reach reserves the right to require a casual employee who is being paid despite their program being cancelled to perform alternative work as directed.

12. Trust and cooperation

- 12.1 The successful implementation of this policy relies on the trust and cooperation of staff, crew, supporters and volunteers. Exploitation of this policy, for example, falsifying time worked, will be considered gross misconduct.

Communication strategy

Where a Reach office is declared closed due to extreme weather, following is a list of recommended communications to be issued:

- 1. Publicly post on website
- 2. Contact upcoming clients
- 3. Contact all staff, crew, supporters and volunteers via the following platforms: Email, Facebook and text.