



Inclement Weather: Are your snow blowers and shovels ready? What about your Company's Inclement Weather Policy...is that ready too?

When there is a threat of bad weather, does your business have a weather policy in place? OR do you just *HOPE* everything will work out and it's business as usual?

Since HOPE is not a solid business plan, we recommend that you plan now how your business will handle possible delayed openings or closings due to inclement weather.

In some places it is snow and ice, while in other regions it might be flooding and hurricanes that can have a great impact on a company's operations.

Employee Handbook Policies

For companies without a policy or guidelines to manage inclement weather/hazard situations, confusion legitimately arises over the use of vacation hours/paid time off (PTO) time when the office is closed, opens late, dismisses early. ***Gray policies can create confusion and possible risks for employers.*** Clearly defined policies create an environment of clear expectations. The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) recently discussed the intent of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as it relates to how businesses manage missed hours/time off, specifically for hourly employees, during periods of inclement weather. A number of scenarios could potentially result in the company having to decide if they will pay or not pay employees during periods of inclement weather. ***Do not wait for bad weather to occur. Put your policies in place now!***

Policies McCloskey Partners recommends you consider are included below:

- **Office remains open and its business as usual:** Hourly Employee XYZ cannot make it to work. We recommend having a policy in place that communicates if Employee XYZ will be paid in instances when the company is open but the employee opts to not report to work.
- We recommend that any policy a company has includes language that it's up to the personal discretion of the employee to decide to report to work during periods when the company is open and the employee would need to commute during periods of bad weather. Employees need to use their own discretion and only commute if they feel safe.
- When employees cannot make it to the office, we recommend that your employee handbook policy clearly communicate if the employee can or cannot use accrued/available vacation/paid time off/sick/personal hours.
- **Office has a delayed opening:** The Company decides to open a few hours after the standard opening time. We recommend having a policy in place that communicates if employees will be paid in instances the company makes the decision to open after its standard start time.
- **Office closes early for the day:** The Company decides to close a few hours early. We recommend having a policy in place that communicates if employees will be paid in instances when the company makes the decision to close early.
- **Assign Essential Personnel:** Prior to any bad storm being predicted, we recommend that companies designate essential employees. These are employees that are required to report to work in all instances of bad weather; even when the company opens late or closes. Employees designated as "essential" personnel are required to still report. Every business may not need to designate "essential" employees. Examples of companies in industries that may want to designate someone as "essential" are: Delivery services, healthcare practices, shipping companies, etc.

Be prepared for the next winter storm or weather disruption!

Make sure your policies are not overly generous: For employers, preparing for inclement weather it is important to keep your workplace safe and your business productive. Keep in mind that whatever you initially put in your policy, will be difficult to change at a later time. So while we understand you want to be fair to your employees, we do not recommend stating that you will pay every hourly employee for all hours missed. While this is very generous, your business could negatively be affected by this approach. A season of bad inclement weather, where the office is closed often, could create a lot of unproductive time where the business is not able to perform at maximum capacity and depending on the industry that you are in patients are cancelled, shipments are cancelled and deliveries are not made.

As a business owner, this means decreased revenues. Before you promise to pay employees for every hour missed, we recommend really thinking your strategy through.

Be sure to develop and include an inclement weather/natural disaster policy in your employee handbook. As with all company guidelines, your policies are a reflection of the culture of your company and its brand.

When you have questions about your inclement weather/natural disaster policy, or other Human Resources issues, contact McCloskey Partners, LLC.

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