



## White Paper

# Getting ready for winter 2024

October 2024



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With the clocks going back this month, and Christmas cards (and more) appearing in the shops, the winter season will soon be upon us.

While hybrid working has seen elements of the picture change in recent years, a considerable number of us are still reliant on access to buildings, sites and transport. With what has been a variable summer for most of the UK, what is predicted to be heading our way this winter, and what could we be doing to be ready for it?

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## 1. What is the forecast for this winter?

The Met Office recognises that due to the “chaotic nature” of the atmosphere, rapid changes in weather patterns can cause longer term forecasting to be difficult. Even so, the sophistication and range of current weather models allows meteorologists to make reasonable assumptions on the likely medium-term conditions, providing an “indication of how the weather might change, or be different from normal, (i.e. warmer, colder, wetter, drier) across the whole UK.”

For the 7th-21st November 2024, the Met Office is predicting:

“A change in the broad weather pattern over the UK is expected towards mid-November 2024 and beyond, as high pressure initially over the nearby continent tends to become more focussed to the north or northwest of the UK. This may allow areas of low pressure, south shifted from their more typical tracks, to approach southern UK and bring rain or showers at times. As a result, after a relatively dry start to the month in the south and east it is likely to become wetter than average here, while conversely northwestern areas, after a wetter start to the month, will tend to revert to drier than average conditions. Temperatures will probably be close to average for much of this period, although some colder interludes are possible.”

With it being a La Niña winter ([How will La Nina affect our winter weather? | Official blog of the Met Office news team](#)) other forecasters looking longer term are predicting:

- A cold winter with conditions starting earlier than usual;
- Increased likelihood of frost and ice and snow in parts of the country;
- Increased likelihood of rain and stormier conditions; and
- An increased risk of flooding in parts of the country.

The Met Office also provide a more comprehensive 3-5 day forecast, which provides detailed information on regional expected in the short-term.

The message is “be prepared”.



# Met Office

## 2. What does the law say about workplace temperature?

Regulation 7 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, require employers to provide a "reasonable" temperature in the workplace. L24 the Approved Code of Practice and guidance to the regulations states:

"The temperature in a workplace should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius. If work involves rigorous physical effort, the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. However, these temperatures may not necessarily provide reasonable comfort, depending on other factors such as air movement, relative humidity and worker clothing."

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, regulation 34, requires "Suitable and sufficient steps must be taken to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that during working hours the temperature at a construction site that is indoors is reasonable having regard to the purpose for which that place is used.

Where necessary to ensure the health or safety of persons at work on a construction site that is outdoors, the construction site must, so far as is reasonably practicable, be arranged to provide protection from adverse weather, having regard to:

- (a) the purpose for which the site is used; and
- (b) any protective clothing or work equipment provided for the use of any person at work there."

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, require employers to assess the risks and put in place suitable controls to protect their employees.



### 3. What do you need to do to prepare for working in cold weather/cold temperatures?

It's not here yet, but there are several things you can be doing now to make sure this winter doesn't cause you any unnecessary issues. These include:

#### 1. Review your risk assessments

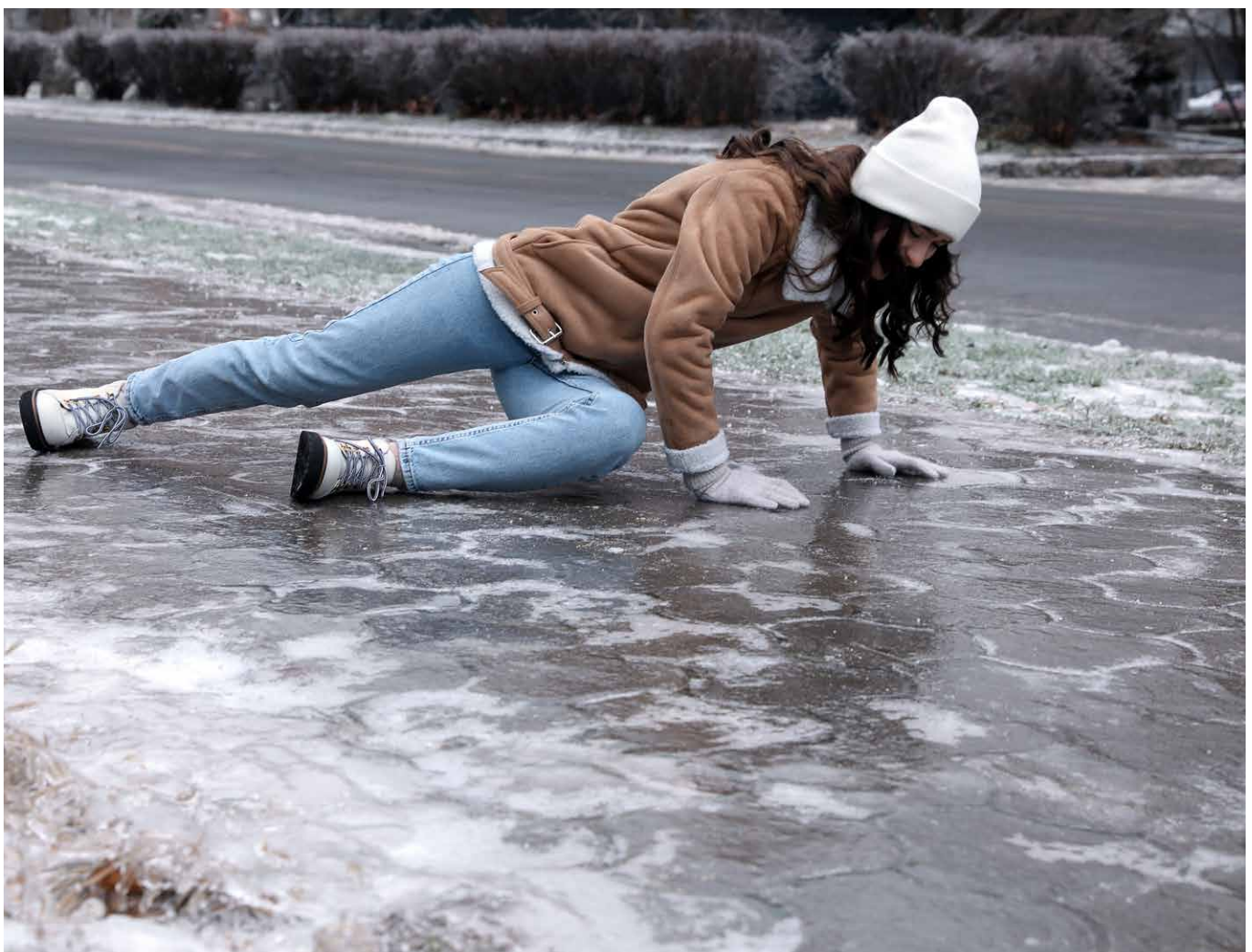
Most organisations already have in place adverse weather plans, but when was the last time yours was updated, and when were employees last reminded of what it says?

#### 2. Slips, trips and falls

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) "statistics show slipping and tripping to be the single most common cause of major injury in UK workplaces". They also accounted for 32% of non-fatal injuries to employees across Great Britain in 2022/23.

Falling over on snow or ice led to 2,919 admissions to hospital in 2014/15 according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). Falling leaves and wet weather are both also predictable conditions during the winter months. Look to keep travel routes clear, be aware of the effects of prolonged wet weather (particularly in entrances and receptions) and plan your management for snow and ice, should it occur.

[Slips and trips - Icy conditions and winter weather](#)



### 3. Driving

According to the AA “breakdowns and accidents are more common in the winter when road conditions are challenging.” They also identify that “stopping distances can be 10 times longer when it’s icy”.

If you have employees who are driving for work, what additional precautions/information are you advising, there is a lot out there. For example, both the RAC and AA (as well as others) provide a range of useful advice, such as:

[A complete guide to safe driving in the snow | RAC Drive](#)  
[Winter driving advice | AA](#)

Vehicle maintenance is equally important so make sure your car fleet in addition to your drivers are prepared. The Highway Code also provides specific advice for driving in adverse weather conditions:

[The Highway Code - Driving in adverse weather conditions \(226 to 237\) - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

### 4. Cold stress

Cold stress occurs when the body is no longer able to maintain its normal temperature. It typically occurs where in cold weather the body diverts blood away from the limbs to help maintain your bodies core temperature. This, in turn can result in cold stress, hypothermia and frostbite.

Those working outdoors are particularly vulnerable to cold stress and the HSE, while not providing direct guidance on the subject, do signpost applicable resources.

[Heat and cold stress - Temperature - HSE](#)

Have your employees been provided with appropriate PPE, clothing and advice for the relevant conditions they are working in, and do they know/are they wearing and using it correctly?



## 5. Wellbeing

The NHS have identified that “cold weather can make some health problems worse and even lead to serious complications”, particularly for older people or those with long-term health conditions. They also recognise that people can also be “affected by the changing seasons, and as the weather gets colder and the days become shorter, this may negatively impact their mental health.”

### Winter wellbeing: Keeping Well

Additionally, if any adverse weather persists, contact with employees may become more difficult, certainly if they are working remotely or alone for an extended period.

Recognising such adverse weather possibilities and having an agreed process in place to accommodate and manage these possible changes where occurring will help. Having managers aware of them and able to recognise such issue in advance will further help.

## 6. Buildings works and maintenance

There will be organisations planning works in the coming months, from refurbishments to large construction projects. Adverse cold weather can obviously affect these, so understanding the prevailing weather can help make informed decisions on how to manage these projects to best effect.

Similarly, making sure your building systems and services are all properly maintained will reduce the risk of something going wrong, usually at the time you need it most. Check your planned regimes and any additional resources or equipment you may need (e.g. grit, oil, diesel, lights).



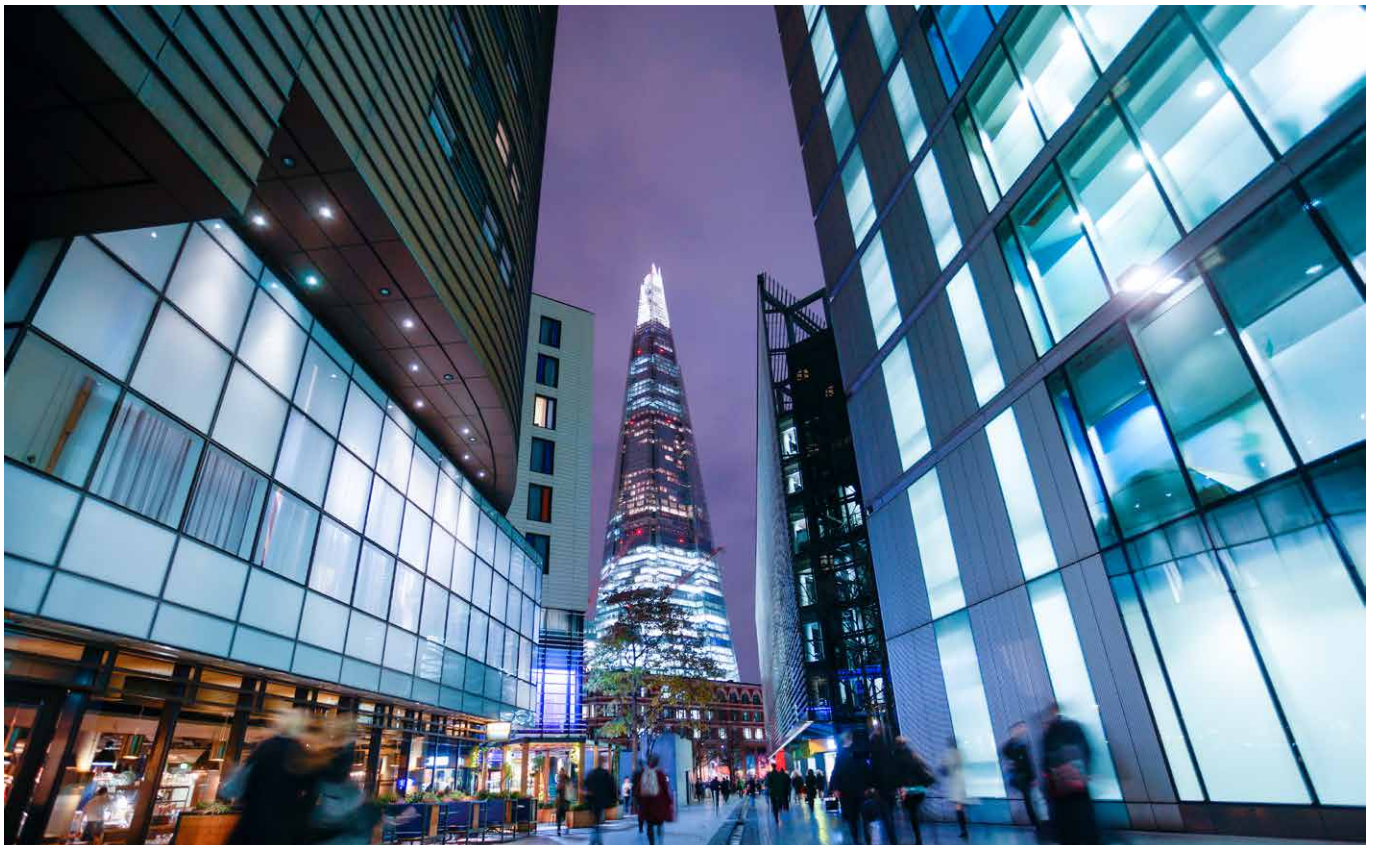
## 7. Keep up to date

As well as preparing in advance, knowing when adverse cold weather is likely to occur and where is equally important, so you can implement your plan. A range of services are available including the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Weather-Health Alert system. This is aimed at **“health and social care professionals and anyone with a role in reducing health impacts caused by extended periods of hot or cold weather.”**

Alerts for the Cold-Health Alert service alert (as with the Heat-Health Alert service) are colour coded depending on the type and severity of the event.

[Cold-Health Alerts - Met Office](#)

Last year the HSE pointed out the risk of cold weather in press release ([Cold weather working: Helping workers stay safe and warm | HSE Media Centre](#)), if the predictions are correct, it is likely we may see something similar this year too.



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Call us on  
+44 (0)1403 269375



Email us at  
[info@assurityconsulting.co.uk](mailto:info@assurityconsulting.co.uk)



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