

WORK ENVIRONMENT



OHS Measures During Inclement Weather



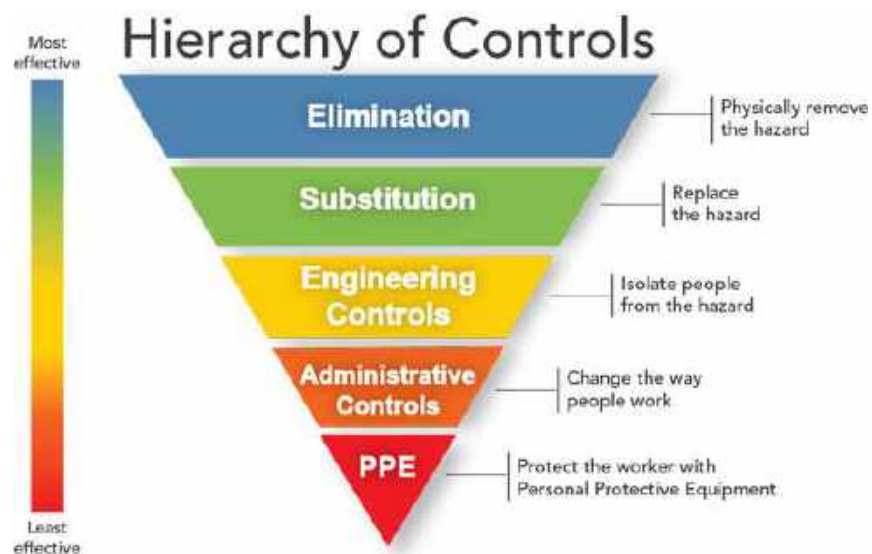
Employers are duty bound to ensure the health and safety of workers at all time in every aspect related to the work. This is particularly true when workers are exposed to adverse weather conditions. The employer is legally obliged to conduct a risk assessment of all work activities. Such assessment must cover the risks to the health and safety of workers to which they are exposed whilst at work. This includes the eventuality of work being performed in inclement weather.

RISK ASSESSMENT

In performing such a risk assessment, the employer is to allow the participation of the workers in all decision-making processes, and the workers given every opportunity to discuss the risks and the measures to be taken. Once the risk assessment is finalised, the employer has to provide workers with comprehensible and relevant information on the risks identified by such assessment and on the preventive and protective measures to be implemented so as to address the identified risks.

The measures to be implemented by the employer to address the risks which cannot be avoided must be based on the general principles of prevention as laid down in the Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act, Chapter 424 of the Laws of Malta. The general principles of prevention are reflected in a hierarchy of controls set out in descending order of preference with the avoidance of risk being given the highest priority.

There are various measures that can be implemented to reduce the risks at the workplace. It is important that these measures follow the hierarchy of controls.



If the work can be postponed and workers are allocated other jobs or tasks which do not expose them to the risks associated with inclement weather, that would be the ideal solution. If this is not possible other engineering and, or administrative measures must be applied to minimise the risks as far as reasonably practicable. Lastly, the employer is obliged to provide all the necessary personal protective equipment identified in the risk assessment. As a rule, the employer must be aware of any approaching inclement weather by keeping a look out for daily weather forecasts and alerts from the Civil Protection Department.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of measures that can be implemented by employers to address risks associated with adverse weather.

All employees should be provided with appropriate training and information in advance and in good time of the measures required to be taken, and supervised to ensure that they are taking all control measures.

IN CASE OF HIGH WINDS

In case of high winds:

- substitute any tasks and stop any work (especially work at heights) that become too dangerous due to high winds,
- avoid exposing workers in open areas at high altitudes,
- secure any loose objects or other material which may be blown away either by bringing them inside whenever possible or by using ropes, weights, chains, etc,
- ensure that latches, doors and windows are secure,
- the use of ladders in adverse weather is not recommended but if unavoidable, ensure that ladders and scaffolding are adequately secured.
- ensure suitability and stability of all edge protection structures,
- be aware that structures or objects can move suddenly and that lifting objects like wooden planks may act as sails,



- use personal fall protection equipment and secure yourself properly when working at heights,
- use eye protection to protect against dust/debris,
- do not reach or try to grab an object or tool if it blows away,
- take shelter or stay indoors whenever possible,
- be familiar with the escape route in case of evacuation or emergency,
- if you are driving and are unable to find shelter inside a building, stay in your vehicle, preferably in an area where you are less likely to be hit by falling trees or power lines,
- keep a distance from high vehicles (such as transport trucks, vehicles towing trailers, etc) since strong winds can overturn these vehicles or cause objects being carried to be blown away,
- do not use cranes, construction lifts and other lifting equipment in winds with speed higher than that stated by the manufacturer,
- leave tower cranes in free slew and without loads attached to the hook when not in use,
- after the high wind warning has passed, check in with all workers, assess the effects of the high winds on the workplace and resume work only after a thorough assessment particularly of lifting appliances, scaffolds, suspended working platforms, electrical installations, etc, and after all remedial measures have been taken.

IN CASE OF HEAVY RAIN OR HAIL

In case of heavy rain or hail:

- substitute any tasks and stop any work (especially work at heights) that becomes too dangerous due to heavy rain or hail,
- avoid exposing workers in open areas,
- avoid use of electrical tools in exposed areas,
- secure excavation sites against risk of flooding and, or collapse,
- have a safety plan and take appropriate safety measures for work carried out in confined spaces and other areas which may become flooded including basements,
- provide areas where workers can take shelter,
- use adequate personal protective equipment, e.g. raincoat, anti-slip safety shoes, boots, high visibility jackets, etc,
- be alert to signs of rising water or in-rush water,
- don't walk through flooded water without knowing the conditions of the ground,



- be familiar with the escape route in case of evacuation or emergency,
- limit or eliminate use of bicycles and motorcycles,
- employ extra care when driving vehicles or mobile work equipment in limited visibility and wet roads,
- drivers should be advised to avoid road areas where water tends to flow or collect in significant amounts,
- have a safety plan and take appropriate safety measures to prevent injuries and deaths caused by lightning, particularly of people who work outdoors (such as those involved in outdoor recreation, construction workers, road crews, landscapers, farm workers, etc),
- after the heavy rain or hail have passed, check in with all workers and assess the effects of the heavy rain or hail on the workplace. Resume work only after a thorough assessment particularly of lifting appliances, scaffolds, suspended working platforms, electrical installations, etc,
- have a plan on how to safely restore electricity in areas likely to be flooded (including basements) so that health is protected, and further damage avoided. The plan must include the isolation of all electricity power sources in flooded areas.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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