

WINTER WEATHER CAN AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS

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Winter weather is unpredictable and can have a large impact on your business. While maintaining business operations is always at the forefront of your mind, it is important to consider employee safety as well. You should have policies and procedures in place before bad weather hits so that your company and employees are as prepared as possible.

DRIVING ON COMPANY TIME

A major concern regarding winter weather is employees who drive a company car or vehicle as part of their workday. All vehicles should be given a safety check by a mechanic before the bad weather hits, and they should also be equipped with emergency materials such as a snow scraper, blanket, first aid kit and flashlight.

In addition, employees should be instructed to dress properly for the weather, including a hat, scarf and gloves, or have extra clothing on hand in case of a breakdown or accident.

In order to protect your company against liability, any employees who may drive in bad weather on company time should be trained in safe, cautious driving techniques and what to do in case of an accident. Also consider employees who drive as part of their commute—it may be wise to educate them in cautious winter driving techniques to ensure their safety while driving to and from work.

When bad weather is coming, it is important to review your policies and communicate with employees to ensure that your company can handle the situation.

NAVIGATING EMPLOYEE PAY

Pay issues arise when weather forces your business to close for any length of time or prevents employees from making it to work even if your business remains open.

For non-exempt (typically hourly) employees, you are only required to pay them for the hours they actually work. Thus, if your business opens late, closes early or closes for an entire day, you are not required to pay them for any time missed. If an exempt (typically salaried) employee works any part of the day, you must pay them for a full day. Similarly, if the business is closed for a day or more but less than a full week, you need to pay exempt employees their normal salary if they worked any part of that week. You do not need to pay employees if business is closed for a full week. This applies whether your company uses a five-day or seven-day workweek. You may, however, require that they use available paid time off or vacation time, if available. If your business remains open but an exempt employee cannot come in due to weather conditions, this is a personal reason, and you do not need to pay them.

One option to ease the loss of a business day or any missed productivity is to ask exempt employees to work from home if you are already paying them for the day. You may also consider offering a telecommuting option during inclement weather even if your business remains open so employees can avoid the dangers of driving in the extreme cold or snow.

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BE PREPARED

Employees should be informed of your company policies related to inclement weather—safety, attendance and pay-related. You should have an established communication method to inform your employees of a business closing or delay. When bad weather is coming, address all your policies again, remind employees of communication channels to address attendance and plan for the worst potential outcome to ensure your company is prepared for the weather.

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