

Sample Policy: Bad-Weather Time Off

The following sample policy was excerpted from [The Book of Company Policies](#), published by HR Specialist, © 2007. Edit for your organization's purposes.

"If federal offices in (your city) are not open for business due to severe weather conditions, then our office will not be open for business that day. If during the day, blizzard conditions arise and federal offices close early, we will do likewise. Employees will not be paid for the period of time that the office is closed."

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

When it comes to inclement weather, you need to balance your need for productivity against the workers' safety concerns. Some companies allow employees to use personal days to "pay" for weather days off if they opt to stay home. Others will allow work delays, by which the staff makes up the time later that day or week.

Begin your policy with: "Unless the office is closed, employees are expected to come to work." Then make it clear that even if the company is open, employees can decline to come to work if they think the weather poses a danger. However, they will have to use a day of leave or lose a day of pay if they choose to stay home, and they must notify their supervisor as soon as they know that they won't be able to come in. (You may want to designate a special phone number your employees can call before the office opens that day.)

Caution: You can't dock exempt workers at an hourly rate for being late or when your business is closed; that would violate the FLSA and make the exempt employee eligible for overtime pay in the future. You are legally entitled, however, to dock nonexempt workers at an hourly rate.

If your time-off policy gives employees personal days to use as they wish, it will make the policy more palatable. Another option is to allow unscheduled leave in weather emergencies.

Tip: You might want to reward those workers who do make it into the office, with free lunch or an extra vacation day, for example.

As part of your policy, decide under what circumstances your office will close. For example, you may want to follow the lead of large local firms or government offices, especially if you do business with them. Or, you might decide to close only when the Weather Service warns of blizzard conditions or hurricane-force winds and rain.

Whatever your decision, include a notification procedure in your policy. If you follow the closing schedule of local governments or schools, that can be as simple as telling workers to tune in to the news. If you close on a case-by-case basis, you may want to set up a phone chain, leave messages on employees' voice mail or e-mail, post notices with your local all-news station or use a combination of these methods.