

NHS BORDERS ESTATES DEPARTMENT

WINTER MAINTENANCE PROTOCOL

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Estates Department snow clearing, salting and gritting protocol provides for efficient winter maintenance service. The operation of this protocol ensures users of external areas are provided with safe and adequate access to hospitals, car parks, Health Centres, offices and all associated NHS Borders buildings.

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that NHS Borders has considered the risks from snow and ice and has plans in place to reduce the risks.

NHS Borders has a legal obligation to ensure the safety off all members of staff and members of the public when using the buildings, footpaths and car parks on their property. Snow and ice may present risks to the continuation of the provision of services which are provided by the NHS Borders. It is therefore important to plan ahead for potential problems that may be caused by snow and ice. NHS Borders is required to demonstrate that it is acting reasonably in the event of snow and ice conditions and that it has plans to reduce the risks.

Members of the public and staff accessing property owned by NHS Borders have a responsibility to take care of their own safety and to only use areas that have been cleared of snow and gritted/salted.

2. SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

NHS Borders will endeavor to provide a complete service to the external areas of all buildings. However when there are abnormal weather conditions, it can be difficult to treat phenomenon such as freezing rain or black ice. NHS Borders will respond as quickly as possible in areas where this has occurred.

Any complaints or requests for emergency snow clearing, salting and gritting should be reported via the Estates Helpdesk/BGH Telephone Exchange. Estates Staff or sub-contractors will be instructed to attend site and treat the areas required. In addition NHS Borders have staff on call 24 hours a day to attend site if required.

3. PLANNED SYSTEM

NHS Borders requires the weather forecasts to be checked on a daily basis to ascertain overnight conditions e.g. frost, snowfall etc. It is recommended that the MET Office five day forecast is monitored for this procedure. If the temperature is predicted to fall below zero degrees Celsius or snowfall is forecast the Estates Operations Manager will inform staff with immediate effect. Sub-contractors are employed to cover Health Centres and Community Hospitals. These individuals will be responsible for checking the weather forecasts for their designated areas.

It is suggested the weather forecast for the following day is checked no later than 11:00hrs. The passing on of this information at the earliest possible stage will ensure adequate time is provided to take necessary preventative measures. Pre

salting applications may be carried out in the evening with return to site by 05:00hrs for an early assessment of conditions. Before pre salting applications are carried out staff will consider the following: i) surface temperature; ii) dampness of surface areas; iii) air temperature and humidity.

Prior planning should ensure minimal difficulties are encountered in transporting materials and equipment around sites. Supervisors must ensure that throughout the winter months equipment and materials are easily accessible and located in strategic areas to ensure quick response times. A salt bay is located at the BGH for a stockpile of salt. Occasionally where supplies and location of salting permits, supplies are taken from Scottish Borders Council's supplies at Newtown St Boswells. Sub-contractors and gardeners stock the grit bins at other locations owned by NHS Borders.

Once staff have been informed of the potential for cold weather they will ensure equipment and materials are transported to key locations. All areas designated as requiring an application of salt will be treated.

Estates staff or sub-contractors on call will respond to call outs as quickly as possible and plough/apply grit/salt appropriate to the conditions. Due to the heightened risk of slips, cold conditions and the use of machinery, it is a preference that two members of estates staff/sub-contractors attend the Borders General Hospital and other Health Board properties when responding to adverse weather conditions. If this is not possible, the member of staff must be made aware of the NHS Borders Policy on Lone Working Arrangements and the protocols within this must be followed.

Estates staff/sub-contractors will keep a log of all gritting carried out which will include times, dates and specifics of where snow clearing/gritting has taken place, including any problems on the route.

Snow clearing/gritting will be prioritised on the day according to the severity of the conditions. NHS Borders run a priority system to keep main routes into buildings open. Where several areas are badly affected then snow clearing/gritting will be prioritised as it would be for severe conditions. In severe conditions the following should apply:

BGH:

- Huntlyburn main drive then onto BGH main drive;
- Past the bus stop, A&E and the main entrance back up the main drive;
- Onto the Melrose bypass around the traffic island and back down the main drive for a second pass;
- Two passes of the maintenance block;
- Main car parks, Melburn Lodge, Cauldshiels and into the Margaret Kerr Unit
- Paths and footpaths leading to the main hospital building;
- Newstead office blocks and Westgrove;
- Further pass of the main BGH site as above.

Other Community Hospitals and Health Centres will have snow cleared/ gritted/ salted as above with the main vehicle routes and footpaths attended to as a priority. Where access to a specific building is delayed staff members have 'ice free' that can be used to melt ice on the main access routes.

All staff expected to attend call outs have access to 4x4 vehicles.

4. RESOURCES

NHS Borders will allocate appropriate funding towards the cost of winter maintenance. This will be reviewed on an annual basis and spend is dependent on weather conditions in a particular year.

Costs typically cover areas such as: vehicles, snow tyres, fuel, staff costs (including sub-contractors), salt/grit etc.

5. PERSONNEL, HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING

Safe working procedures have been provided for all employees engaged in gritting and snow clearing operations.

Clearing ice/snow and grit spreading in winter can be hazardous and care should be taken to ensure your own safety.

Operatives should always:

- Dress appropriately for the conditions;
- Wear good sturdy footwear;
- Wear hi-visibility clothing when gritting/snow clearing;
- Complete a log of snow clearing operations.