

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) **SEVERE WEATHER**

SETTING	Service-wide
FOR STAFF	All staff
PATIENTS	N/A

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance in the event of severe weather affecting the Retrieve Service. It should be read with reference to Appendix 1, which provides a summary of the Met Office guidance on weather warnings.

Principle considerations

- Safety of the Retrieve Team, BAEMS drivers and our patients is our primary focus. This means that there may be occasions when it is not possible to provide some, or all, elements of the service for a short period of time.
- Team members, drivers and the Leadership Team should dynamically assess risk and manage transfer referrals according to the principles outlined below.
- All team members should be prepared for severe weather and, if conditions are anticipated to change during a shift, travel with appropriate additional clothing (e.g. warm jacket) in the ambulance when undertaking transfers.
- Team members who are completing administrative tasks, may be offered the opportunity to work from home to avoid travelling in dangerous conditions or being on base during dangerous weather events.
- The Clinical Education Team and Leadership Team will liaise regarding any planned non-clinical work and make a practical decision to keep staff safe during extreme weather events.

Severe weather affecting staff

Many Retrieve Team members live long distances from the operational bases. This means there is an increased likelihood of adverse weather causing travel disruption which, in turn, will impact service provision.

In the event of extreme weather preventing you travelling to work, you must do the following:

- Communicate with the team on base as soon as you are able. The team on base should contact Leadership Single Point of Contact (SPOC) during daytime hours.
- Communicate with other team members you are expecting to work with to ensure they are aware you are unable to travel to work.

The Leadership SPOC will:

- Communicate with other team members due on-shift and assess the likelihood of being able to provide a service. They will base this on:

- Team member availability.
- Weather.
- Road conditions.

All reasonable attempts will be made to provide a Retrieve service, including:

- Seeking alternate team members who live closer to base to cover the shift.
- Consulting voluntary agencies who may be able to aid staff journeys to work (https://uhbw.mystaffapp.org/14935/document_view.pdf).

Staff travelling long distances to operational bases may choose to stay at the operational base overnight rather than travel home in adverse weather conditions. Beds are available for this rare event.

Severe weather preventing vehicle movements

Consideration should be given to repositioning vehicles to the most accessible areas close to operational bases when severe weather is anticipated to allow mobilisation in difficult conditions.

If road and / or weather conditions prevent safe movement of vehicles, you must inform the Leadership Team SPOC as soon as you are able. They will:

- Liaise with BAEMS and voluntary agencies who may be able to provide alternative secondary vehicles.
- Inform South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) via Trust Incident Manager and inform them that referrals will be passed to them until Retrieve is available:
 - Primary contact: trustincidentmanager@swast.nhs.uk / 0300 303 4874.
 - Secondary contact: clinicalhubdutymanager@swast.nhs.uk / 0300 369 0093 (select Hub and then option for Duty Manager).
- Inform the South West Critical Care Network and clinical colleagues that Retrieve's service may be delayed or unavailable in its usual format but that calls are still being accepted. Telephone or WhatsApp contact will be made so information can be cascaded.
- Inform other members of the Leadership Team so that resilience plans can be enacted.
- Inform the NHS England South West Regional Operations Centre (england.swroc@nhs.net) and UHBW Division of Surgery or on-call manager (via switchboard – 0117 9230000) (see 'Escalation and Communication' SOP for further information).
- Review the provision of service every 3-6 hours and reinstate it as soon as deemed safe.
- Complete a DATIX.
- If road and / or weather conditions affect a transfer that is in progress, the Retrieve 'Breakdown' SOP should be followed.

Road closures, bridge warnings and closures

Roads and bridges may be closed due to severe weather. This may directly affect routes to and from hospitals within the region. BAEMS drivers must communicate these in the Huddle at the start of each shift if the information is available or problems are anticipated.

Drivers should work with the team to plan an appropriate alternative route ahead of any transfer referral and this should be communicated to other teams using DoctoLib Connect app.

If a road or bridge closure is anticipated to affect response times, the Duty Consultant should communicate this with the referring hospital when the call is received. Delays should be documented on ARCEMS.

Extreme hot weather

In the event of extreme heat and high temperatures extra precautions should be taken at base and on transfer.

All vehicles are equipped with air conditioning, the driver should ensure this is working at the start of the shift. Drivers should consider additional fuel checks and refill due to increase demand from air conditioning. There is extra drinking water on base, increase vehicles supplies to ensure the patient and team have an adequate supply.

At SWR base, Bristol the operations room and pod room both have air conditioning. These areas should be utilised by staff while on base. On the Peninsula base, Launceston, no air conditioning is available. Team members are encouraged to relocate to the Launceston hospital main building as required. Fans are available in both bases and should be utilised as well as the use of window blinds and shutters.

Team members may wear shorts on base but should change into uniform upon deployment and mobilisation from base.

Document Change Control

Date of Version	Version Number	Lead for Revisions	Type of Revision	Description of Revision
07/2026	V1.4	Lead Nurse	Minor	Addition of hot weather section.
01/2025	V1.3	Lead Nurse	Minor	Clarification in event of incident affecting staff.

Document Governance

REFERENCES	Met Office: www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-warnings
RELATED DOCUMENTS AND PAGES	Breakdown SOP
AUTHORISING BODY	
SAFETY	Team, driver and patient safety is our primary focus. This means that there may be occasions when it is not possible to provide some, or all, elements of the service for a short period of time.
QUERIES AND CONTACT	Retrieve Leadership Team

Appendix 1 – Guidance on weather warnings

The Met Office is the United Kingdom's national weather service. Retrieve will use Met Office warnings to instigate procedures to ensure service provision in the event of extreme weather.

Met Office weather warnings are categorised as follows:

Yellow

Yellow warnings can be issued for a range of weather situations. Many are issued when it is likely that the weather will cause low-level impact, including some disruption to travel. People may be able to continue with their daily routine, but there will be some that will be directly impacted and so it is important to assess if you could be affected.

Other yellow warnings are issued when the weather could bring much more severe impacts to the majority of people but the certainty of those impacts occurring is much lower.

It is important to read the content of yellow warnings to determine which weather situation is being covered by the yellow warning.

Amber

There is an increased likelihood of impacts from severe weather, which could potentially disrupt your plans. This means there is the possibility of travel delays, road and rail closures, power cuts and the potential risk to life and property. You should think about changing your plans and taking action to protect yourself and your property. You may want to consider the impact of the weather on your family and your community and whether there is anything you need to do ahead of the severe weather to minimise the impact.

Red

Dangerous weather is expected and, if you haven't already done so, you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the severe weather. It is very likely that there will be a risk to life, with substantial disruption to travel, energy supplies and possibly widespread damage to property and infrastructure. You should avoid travelling, where possible, and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

The Weather Impact Matrix provides a visual indication of the above warnings:

