

BAD WEATHER NO EXCUSE FOR PAID TIME OFF

With extreme snowfall causing severe delays in the north of England today, a new survey reveals that over half of UK employers do not pay their workers when freak weather prevents them from coming into work, according to Croner, a leading UK provider of employment advice and support.

When severe weather hits, employers can be left counting the cost of lost hours and productivity as employees subsequently fail to get into work. It's not surprising then that fifty-two percent of employers polled believe that adverse weather is insufficient grounds for additional paid leave.

With occurrences of freak weather on the rise, Croner is advising that although bosses are well within their rights to cut employees' pay, they should be looking at reasonable ways to help staff continue their work - and get paid.

Richard Smith, employment law expert at Croner, says: "Come rain, hail or shine, all staff have a contract with their employer to show up for work each day. Although not a legal requirement, having an "adverse weather policy" could help in certain situations to avoid conflict or confusion should an employee be late for work or fail to attend all together.

"Employers can legally refuse to pay employees for any missed time, but before cutting pay, employers could consider options such as allowing employees to take the time as annual leave, providing home-working solutions or allowing them to make up the time lost. With the prevalence of laptops and email, it's now much easier to enable employees, particularly those at managerial level, to continue to perform their duties without having to be onsite.

"They could also consider the benefits of paid leave as a goodwill gesture to employees, which can help boost morale, motivation and loyalty. Forty-eight percent of employers we surveyed are already doing this and should be making staff aware of this extra perk."

But Smith advises his clients that they also need to adopt a common sense approach to weather-related absence. He says: "Although it may be inconvenient when staff can't get to work, employers should not risk putting employees in danger by encouraging them to drive in unsafe conditions in an attempt to get to work.

"Above all, employers need to consider whether the benefits of paying staff in times of severe weather outweigh the cost of the working hours lost. A small act of goodwill by UK bosses may go a long way towards keeping a happy, hard-working and safe workforce."