

# Letter to Branches

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## To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues

### Severe Weather and Heavy Snow

This is a further update to Branches following LTB 011/10. As you will be aware, the UK is experiencing its worst winter in 30 years. Safety has to be a priority during this period of severe weather. We are receiving mixed messages in relation to managements approach to dealing with the severe weather, snow and ice; which varies from exceptionally good to totally irresponsible.

It is important that ASRs in Postal Business' and USRs in BT continue to run checks, and monitor the position in their Areas and Regions to ensure management are dealing with the situation sensibly. Could safety representatives continue to check whether proper risk assessments are being carried out; proper consultation is taking place on the drawing up and/or implementation of local severe weather action plans. Thanks to those Branches/safety representatives who have already provided the H&S Dept with reports of the situation in their Areas. Please continue to do so.

### Royal Mail

Following a dialogue with Norman Smith RM Safety Director, copies of the attached guidance to management throughout the country has been provided. The attachments include Lets Talk About guidance on Assessing Winter Risks; and an updated January 2010 Lets Talk About WTLL document on Adverse Weather Conditions which has been issued this week

### BT

People working in BT should refer to the BT Health and Safety Handbook. Detailed below is appropriate advice on Driving in Winter, Watch Your Step, and Snow and Ice.

#### Part 1 - Driving in Winter

Winter is here - Drive Safely

We are facing some of the most uncertain weather patterns on record. There is no doubt that bad weather and longer nights pose a danger - with about 50% of all reported road traffic collisions at night occurring in wet conditions; even though in the UK it is wet on average only 10% of the nights.

Between 3-6 pm is also a dangerous time - when people are travelling home after a busy day at work and children are making their way home from school.

Now is therefore a good time to focus on staying safe on the road this winter - whether you are driving on work business or in your own time.

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Before you Drive, Driving in winter weather - falling leaves, snow, ice, wet and cold - creates a great challenge for vehicles and drivers. Keeping yourself and your vehicle in good technical repair reduces your overall chances of any mishap or disaster while driving in winter weather.

To prepare your vehicle for winter driving give it a complete check-up - electrical system (battery, ignition and lights); brakes; tyres; exhaust; wipers; fluids, radiator/antifreeze and heating/cooling system. Keep your fuel tank near to full to ensure that you do not run out. It is particularly important to check your tyres are in good order, and have plenty of tread depth. Recent research has shown that effective well maintained tyres can have a major effect on stopping distances on wet and slippery roads. Weekly checks, or when refuelling, are recommended. In really extreme weather, prepare an emergency kit for your car. Include items that cater for the unexpected - what would you need if you found yourself stranded miles from help during a snow storm? Include items like warm clothing, boots, gloves or mittens, flashlight with fresh batteries, blankets, and fresh first-aid supplies.

During bad weather let people know where you are going, your route of travel, and when you expect to arrive. Plan your driving and likely arrival time in advance. Never drive if fatigued or under the influence of alcohol. Allow for extra travelling time or even consider delaying a trip if the weather is inclement. Is an alternative method of travel possible? Listen to weather forecasts, and if weather and visibility are hazardous, ask yourself 'is this trip really necessary?' On the road drive according to current road and weather conditions. Whenever driving conditions are less than ideal, it pays to be cautious. Make sure that all windows (front, side and rear) and mirrors are clear and that wipers and defrosters are in good working condition.

Drive slowly with low beam headlights on if visibility is poor, test your brakes frequently, leave a bigger gap and never tailgate. Posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds, in a lower gear and at a safe distance from the vehicle in front are the best precautionary measures against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. Lengthen your following distance behind the vehicle ahead of you - stopping distances double on slippery roads.

#### If the Worst Happens

If you get stranded, don't panic. Keep yourself safe, and follow the detailed procedures in your BT driver's handbook if you are in a work vehicle. In your own vehicle you should contact the appropriate support organisation, such as the RAC and follow their guidance. Safe Driving this Winter Remember to make sure you and your vehicle are in top condition; plan your journeys and adapt your driving style to allow for the road and weather conditions. More detailed winter driving advice is available at ([www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk)) and ([www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk)).

#### Part 2 - Watch Your Step

Winters have been generally mild recently but we should always expect a certain exposure to ice and snow before the spring. Taking care and being vigilant applies equally on our way to work and at work. When outside we need to be extra vigilant when the weather is or has been poor. Snow can mask obstructions and trip hazards, compounded on occasions by the presence of ice underneath the snow. Try to keep to a well-defined route and areas that have been treated when ice and / or snow is present.

It is of course important to take care when inside a building particularly when it is wet and people may have brought snow or mud into the entrance areas to buildings. Working in the external engineering network during bad weather brings its own problems. Hazards such as undulating surfaces and drains or holes are not as obvious when covered by snow or leaves. Care is always needed and when working in rural areas, local knowledge can be particularly relevant, holes created by wildlife e.g. rabbits and badgers may be present when away from defined routes, always tread with caution when you

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cannot see the ground surface. The type of footwear worn is an important factor when avoiding slips and minimising injuries. Protective footwear designed for external work not only provides protection to the toes it also ensures that a good sole and tread helps maintain grip on poor surfaces. The wearing of a boot gives additional ankle support. If you are issued with protective footwear always wear it for the purpose it was issued. All people should consider wearing appropriate footwear when the weather is bad; fashion footwear rarely affords the necessary grip and support when conditions outside are poor.

### Part 3 - Snow and Ice Clearance

Check to make sure that the local supplies of salt are adequate and request more if these stocks become depleted by contacting BT Property on 0800 223388.

BT Property provides a proactive snow & ice clearance service to a number of nominated operational sites in Scotland. At some major office buildings in England, Scotland and Wales, where it has an on-site presence, Monteray provide a reactive service to spread rock salt and clear footpaths where appropriate. At all other sites Monteray provide rock salt in containers for self-help; please ensure that local arrangements are in place to make the main access and egress routes safe during adverse weather.

Conditions underfoot in winter can be hazardous and assessing the state of all work sites is important to ensure that plant and equipment will not slip, and of course it assists you in being well prepared and reduces the risk of an accident.

During strong winds keep clothing buttoned up, especially when working above ground, to stop it ballooning out in the wind. In ice and snow, clear any loose snow from where you are going to work and, if needed, use rock salt to melt any frost or ice. Footwear can become clogged with mud or snow, especially in rural sites. Before climbing a ladder inspect the soles of your protective footwear and scrape off as much as possible. This will stop the mud from sticking on the rungs and becoming a slip hazard.

Pumping out water from an underground structure could result in an area becoming unsafe especially in icy or wintry conditions so carry out this practice with caution.

Remember this could affect members of the public and road users. Do not carry any lighted portable appliance in a vehicle unless expressly approved or installed for the purpose. Never attempt to thaw out a pump or petrol driven equipment with a naked flame. Check hoses for cracks caused by sub zero temperatures.

Cold weather can make muscles tighten up. If you need to undertake manual handling activities always consider using a mechanical aid. If you have to lift, perhaps one or two stretches of the arms, legs and back will increase your body's defence against a pulled muscle or a strain.

#### BT Snow & Ice Policy.

Each building will have an individual snow/ice plan depending on the risks associated with that building.

- Monteray should be delivering against the criteria set down by BT for the management of sites during this weather. This criterion is detailed within the snow and ice policy for the building.
- The plan is located on the main building notice board and is reviewed every year and updated where any change occurs.
- On behalf of BT, Monteray are not required to grit whole areas of car parks, but if/where there are areas clearly requiring additional attention- again this will be detailed in the plan.
- In most buildings there will be an element of individual responsibility and gritting facilities will be provided.
- Access areas to and from buildings (i.e. footpaths) will be gritted
- It is vital that in difficult conditions we all ensure we take extra care and are extra vigilant.

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If additional grit is required this can be obtained by calling BT Property on 0800 223388.

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The Health Safety and Environment Dept will continue to monitor the position.

Yours sincerely

**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

Att.



Severe Weather Lets  
Talk About.doc



Safety WTLL  
Adverse Weather v.3



Snow and ice  
clearance JG.doc



7 road clearance.doc

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