

Snow joke

Can't get to work or you need to look after your kids due to school closures? What are your rights in terms of pay?

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With many employees struggling to get to work in the snow and ice, it is worth reflecting on your rights to be paid if you simply cannot get to work through no fault of your own. Some employers will have 'bad weather' policies so it is worth checking this in the first instance. Such policy may provide for you to still be paid if bad weather genuinely stops you from making it into work.

In the absence of such a policy, you are at the whim of your employer as to whether your pay is docked for non-attendance. Unfortunately, many employers in these troubles times are being mean-spirited and either refusing to pay staff for not getting into work or insisting that the time comes off their annual leave. This is despite guidance from the TUC who has previously said:

“Scrooge bosses who dock pay and take away holiday are needlessly adding to their business woes by creating resentment among staff. Workers who have been prevented from getting to work despite their best efforts should not have to foot the bill for the bad weather conditions.”

The TUC cannot force employers to be charitable though, so how should you approach your employer if they fall into the mean-spirited camp?

- You could offer to make up lost hours by working additional unpaid overtime or different shift-patterns.
- You could also offer to work from home which is especially feasible where you are able to log into computer systems remotely or where you work involves a lot of telephone use.
- If there is a faster direct route to work which is more expensive than usual, you could invite your employer to meet this additional cost if they insist you should be there.

There is no, one, stock approach and you should hope that your employers will appreciate the genuine difficulty you have in the dire conditions. After all, your line managers are likely to be facing the same difficulties themselves in getting to work.

What if you could manage to get to work, but school closures prevent you from doing so due to child care issues?

Again, there is no right to be paid in these circumstances as the situation is different from the reasonable paid time off you would otherwise be entitled to if you are caring for a child who is ill. You would be expected to make arrangements for the children in these circumstances – again unless you have a generous employer who is still prepared to pay you for your time off.

Employers should reflect on the fact that if they are mean-spirited in these times this could sow resentment among their staff which no employer really wants. Employers who would not normally pay for staff who failed to turn up due to bad weather could offer to pay their staff for a limited time only, say for the first one to two days. As least this would show some goodwill on their part.

The general accepted guidance is that whether you are paid or not, you should not put yourself in danger by travelling in dangerous conditions.

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