



Laois County Council
Comhairle Chontae Laoise

Tenant Handbook
Eolai na thionta
For Your Information

SECTIONS

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Enclosed - BE WINTER READY Booklet

Section 1

Introduction

Laois County Council is pleased to present you with a copy of its Tenant Handbook. As your landlord, Laois County Council takes this opportunity to introduce you to, or remind you of, the wide range of services available to you as one of our tenants.

This handbook is an important element in the flow of information between the County Council and its tenants. It allows us to give you more information about the Council and the way it operates.

In addition to the handbook, there is a range of leaflets, circulars, public information notices and annual publications available from our offices.

For your added convenience, a list of contact telephone numbers, including emergency numbers are included at the back of this handbook.

But we also want to hear your views!

We want to make sure that there is a two-way flow of information and we provide a comprehensive customer service for this purpose.

If you have something to say, we want to listen.

How can I contact the Council's Housing Department?

The Housing Department is responsible for the provision, management, maintenance and control of Laois County Council's housing estates and halting sites.

You can write to us all at:-

**Laois County Council,
Aras an Chontae,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois**

**www.laois.ie
Email: housing@laoiscoco.ie**

You can arrange an appointment with any member of the Housing Department, during office hours i.e. 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. A number of interview rooms are available where matters of a confidential nature may be discussed with experienced housing employees.

You can give us your views on the services we provide using the "suggestion Cards" which are available at the public counter.

What will happen after I have given you my opinion?

We will take your views into account when making decisions affecting your home and your neighbourhood.

Section 2

Tenancy Conditions

The conditions of your tenancy agreement are set out in detail in your Tenancy Agreement. For your convenience, the main points are summarised below:

How does my tenancy operate?

- The dwelling must be used as your main home.
- You must not, save with the consent of the Council, cease to reside in your dwelling for more than six weeks in any period of fifty two weeks.
- The dwelling must not be used for business purposes of any kind.
- Rent must be paid in full every week.
- You must give us full details of income and household circumstances.
- You must return your household details form when requested.
- Only domestic pets may be kept and these must be kept under control.
- You must give four weeks notice when surrendering the tenancy.
- You must look after the dwelling properly.
- You must not make alterations to the dwelling without the Council's permission.
- Authorised officers of the Council, and agents authorised by the Council must be allowed to enter and inspect the dwelling at reasonable times to carry out necessary work. (Always request I.D.)
- You must not take lodgers or sub-tenants.
- The tenant shall ensure that a properly maintained Smoke detector is in the dwelling.
- A tenant may not transfer to another dwelling, or surrender the tenancy of your dwelling without the permission of Laois County Council.
- You and your household including visitors shall not cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to neighbours, including:
 - harassment or violence or threats of violence.
 - unreasonably loud noise of any kind.
- The tenant shall not park or allow any persons to park a caravan, or mobile home within the curtilage of the dwelling or in the estate.

Tenants evicted for breach of these conditions will be regarded as having deliberately rendered themselves homeless and there is no obligation on the part of Laois County Council to provide another dwelling.

Section 3

Maintenance & Repairs

The Housing Maintenance Section is responsible for the management and maintenance of the Council's Housing Estates. Laois County Council is responsible for ensuring that houses conform to the minimum standards as set out in the Housing (Standards for rented Houses) Regulations, 1993.

Works to upgrade houses to conform to these standards will be under taken on a phased basis.

Each tenant on the signing of the Tenancy Agreement assumes responsibility for repairs of a non-structural nature and for maintaining the house in a clean and tidy condition. Without prejudice to the generality of this responsibility, the following are examples of the type of repairs for which each tenant is responsible:

INTERNAL REPAIRS:

- (a) Internal Plaster Cracks – non-structural.
- (b) Repairs to or replacement of cupboards, wardrobes, kitchen units and their doors, hinges, handles, locks, catches and drawers*.
- (c) Curtain rails and window boards.
- (d) Chimney sweeping (Annually at least) and any work required because of failure to sweep chimney.
- (e) Repairs arising from condensation damage.
- (f) Internal woodwork such as doors and skirting boards*.
- (g) Ventilator covers.
- (h) Internal decoration.
- (i) Basket/grate in all fireplaces and tiles on fireplace hearths.*

*Where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

DOORS AND WINDOWS:

- (a) External and internal locks, hinges and handles.*
- (b) Window stays, catches and restrictors.*
- (c) Draught proofing of doors and windows.
- (d) Replacement of broken glass.
- (e) Permavents where fitted.
- (f) Internal tiles on window sills and window boards.
- (g) Letter boxes.
- (h) Timberwork on windows, internally, should be painted by the tenant on a regular basis (maximum interval of five years).

*Where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

EXTERNAL REPAIRS:

- (a) Maintenance of gardens and hedges in tidy conditions.

- (b) Repairs to, or replacement of fences and garden boundary walls.
- (c) Repairs to, replacement of, and re-erection of front gates, side gates or doors leading to garden areas, including their support and frames.
- (d) Fuel sheds or outhouses: roof repairs thereto and repair or replacement of doors, locks, door handles or catches.
- (e) Cleaning of silt, leaves or other deposits from gutters.
- (f) No T.V aerials or satellite dishes allowed on chimneys, they should be mounted on brackets & pole off of the external walls or in the attic space. (Reason – High cost of roofing repairs due to damage caused by TV repair men).

ELECTRICAL REPAIRS

- (a) Ceiling roses, lamp holders and plugs.
- (b) Fuses, except mains fuses.
- (c) Elements for electric fires. All repairs to electrical appliances, fires and heaters not installed by the Council.
- (d) Replacement of light bulbs and any bulbs that may be required for pilot lights.
- (e) The repair of light switches.
- (f) The repair of the electrical connections to the water heating cylinder.
- (g) Repair or replacement of immersion heater.

SEPTIC TANKS

- (a) De-sludging septic tanks for rural dwellings.

PLUMBING REPAIRS:

- (a) Repairs to burst pipes in the dwelling caused by frost or freezing temperatures and consequent damage to contents.
- (b) Cleaning of gully traps.
- (c) Cost of clearing of blocked house drain where a dwelling is served by a single drain and the apportioned cost of clearing a combined drain.
- (d) Replacement or repair of waste pipes inside the dwelling.
- (e) Clearing air locks in pipes.
- (f) Replacement or repair of taps on sink unit and wash-hand basins including leaking and dripping taps.*
- (g) Replacement or repair of toilet bowl, cistern and cover.*
- (h) Replacement or repair of wash-hand basin.*
- (i) Replacement or repair of bath.*
- (j) Replacement or repair of ball-cock or other water flotation control unit.
- (k) Replacement or repair of toilet seat, chains and handles.*
- (l) Replacement of shower heads and shower doors.*

*Except where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

What are Structural repairs?

Structural repairs include the following:-

- (a) Roofs
- (b) Walls
- (c) Floors
- (d) Window Frames
- (e) External Doors

- (f) Toilet Bowls
- (g) Baths
- (h) Sinks, provided that they become defective

COOKING AND HEATING APPLIANCES:

- (a) Solid fuel, gas or other heating or cooking appliances.
- (b) The basket/grate in all fireplaces and the replacement of glass panels in doors of room heaters.
- (c) Damage caused to room heater by improper use.
- (d) Repair and replacement of tiles on fireplace/hearth.

INSURANCE:

- (a) Insurance for fittings, fixtures and furniture.

GENERAL:

You are responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage and if the Council undertakes repairs resulting from such damages, the cost of such repairs will be charged to the tenant(s).

You are responsible for repairs to doors, windows, fixtures and fittings in the dwelling caused by destruction or damage by burglary, housebreaking, larceny or theft.

The position of your rent account will be examined on the receipt of a maintenance request by the Council and the Council will undertake to carry out those repairs, for which it has responsibility, only when you have a clear rent account.

TENANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

In the case of old age pensioners and disabled persons living alone, the Council have regard to their special needs and may undertake works which would normally be considered the tenants responsibility.

Will the Council make an exception?

The Council considers requests to execute “tenant responsibility repairs” where exceptional circumstances such as old age, infirmity or disability make it impossible for the tenant to do so. If you are an old age pensioner, and you are unable to look after your house, you should contact the Housing Maintenance Section for more information and assistance.

In the interest of providing an improved housing maintenance service, repairs are categorised as follows:

Emergency

These are repairs carried out where there is a possible danger to human life.

Urgent

These are repairs carried out quickly to avoid damage to the dwelling.

Routine

These are medium priority repairs

The following are examples of the types of repairs in each category:

EMERGENCY	Smoking fuseboard Faulty sockets Tiles falling off roof
URGENT	Leak under sink unit No water in hot tap Leaking roof Leaking pipes Heating
ROUTINE	Replace toilet cistern (if cracked through fair wear and tear) Plastering jobs Downpipes and gutters

What should I do if the repair team calls to my house and I am not there?

When a complaint is made, the telephone number should be left and an appointment will be made by the central repairs section.

Will the Council carry out any repairs I want?

No. A clear division of repair responsibility between the Council and its tenants has been defined.

What type of repairs am I responsible for?

Each tenant, on the signing of his/her Tenancy Agreement, assumes responsibility for repairs of a non-structural nature. The Council will carry out all repairs, assuming your rent is paid up-to-date.

Is my house insured by the Council?

The Council insures the structure of all rented houses. It does not insure the contents. Should you decide to buy your house or if your house is a “vested cottage”, you then become responsible for both structural and contents insurance.

Am I responsible for the garden or just the dwelling itself?

You are responsible for both, and any laneway or walkway adjoining your house. Laneways should be kept in a clean condition and should not be used for dumping. You are responsible for the maintenance of walls, gardens, gates and fences. This is clearly outlined in your Tenancy Agreement.

In addition, you must make sure that you look after your home and garden in a responsible manner.

Under the Litter Byelaws, each householder is obliged to keep free of litter the footpath or pavement adjoining their property and also any road gutter on or at the side of the pavement.

Refuse should be left for collection in a manner that ensures that it does not become litter.

Can I make alterations to my dwelling?

You must get the Council's agreement before starting any improvements, alterations or additions to your home.

We are usually happy to agree to alterations, but we must check them out first.

You may also need planning permission for certain works.

All such construction and erections become the property of the landlord and are not removable by the tenant upon termination of the tenancy nor is there any compensation allowable in respect of them. However, if you decide to purchase your house under a Tenant Purchase Scheme, some allowance will be made for improvements you have made to your home.

In the case of certain unauthorised alterations carried out to the dwelling, the Council may require full re-instatement to the original condition.

What about maintenance in the case of an inter-transfer of tenancy?

Where inter-transfers take place, the tenants involved must sign forms accepting their new dwellings in their existing condition, and no non-urgent repairs will be carried out for the first six months after the date of the inter-transfer. The Council will not accept responsibility for fittings found to be faulty, for example, defects are sometimes found in fireplaces installed by previous tenants.

What about a new tenant?

In the case of a new tenant, every effort will be made to put the dwelling into a fully habitable condition. Where a dwelling is old, it must be appreciated that it cannot be renovated to an "as new" state. Special consideration will be given to the problems of elderly tenants and to exceptional cases of hardship. The Council does not provide central heating where an older house has become vacant.

Can I keep pets in a rented dwelling?

You may keep domestic pets such as cats or dogs, as long as they don't become a nuisance to your neighbours. You are absolutely prohibited from keeping horses in gardens or open spaces in housing estates.

Horses, poultry, pigs and non-domestic birds are not pets. Keeping any of these is a serious breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

Under the control of Dogs Act, 1986, every dog should be licensed. A licence costs €20.00 and is available from any Post Office. Failure to have a dog licensed or to keep a dog under proper control may result in an on-the-spot fine of €100. Particular care should be taken to keep your dog under control on bin day.

Section 4

Rents

The Housing Rents section will assess your rent and deal with any queries, which you may have about your account, methods of payment, arrears, evictions etc. Some general questions are answered below, but you can call the Housing Rents section on 057 86 64090 at any time with more specific queries in relation to your account. It is important that you know your account number before calling us.

How can I pay my rent?

It is Council's policy to provide its tenants with as broad a range of payment methods as possible. Payments can currently be made by the following methods:

- Household Budget Scheme (details from the Rent Section, Aras an Chontae or your local Post Office).
- Standing Order.
- In person at the Council's payments office – open Monday to Friday from 9.30 am – 3:30 pm.
- Cheques, Postal Order (no cash) through the postal system.
- Through your local Rent Collector.

How is my rent calculated?

Your rent is calculated based on the Council's Differential Rent Scheme. The Council reviews its scheme every year. Rents are assessed on total household income in a manner which ensures that the amount you are charged in rent is reasonable and does not lead to undue financial difficulties. A detailed copy of the scheme is available on request.

What if another person in the house is in receipt of income?

All household income is assessable for rent. The person with the highest net income is the Principal Income Earner whether he/she is the tenant or not. If there are subsidiary income earners, the rent is increased accordingly.

What if my Circumstances change?

You should keep the Council informed of any change in your household circumstances. For example, you should let us know when:

- A person in your household gets a job.
- A person with an income joins the household.
- A person in the household starts claiming Social Welfare.
- There is a death in the Household.
- There is a birth in the household.

You can notify us of these changes by contacting the Housing rents section. Your new rent will be assessed from the date the changes occur.

What if I don't notify the Council when my circumstances change?

When changes in your circumstances come to light, your rent will be reassessed and your account back-dated.

What if I don't return my rent assessment form?

If you don't return the form, a penalty rent will be added to your weekly rent.

What if my rent falls into arrears?

If you have missed payments, you should contact us immediately before the situation gets out of hand. You can clear your arrears bit by bit provided you make an arrangement and stick to it. In the majority of cases, such arrangements take the form of the weekly or monthly payment plus an agreed contribution towards the arrears. You will be required to commit yourself to such arrangements by signing undertakings to meet the agreed payments.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service (M.A.B.S.)

The primary aim of MABS is to help people cope with debt and to take control of their own finances.

The service is free, confidential and independent and covers

- Money Advice
- Personal Budget
- Community Education

Laois MABS are located at: Railway Mews, Railway Street, Portlaoise.

Contact: (0761) 072620

Will the Council take me to Court?

Yes. We do not like taking our tenants to Court, but we will if we have to when agreements are broken. If you refuse to come to a reasonable agreement or if you do not keep to the agreed plan, the Council will seek to initiate legal proceedings.

The County Council doesn't have any obligation to re-house a person who has been evicted from a Local Authority Dwelling.

Section 5

Vacant Dwellings

Vacant dwellings in an estate can become a target for anti-social behaviour. If you surrender your tenancy without giving us 4 weeks notice, it may have repercussions for your family if you apply for any of Laois County Council's services in the future. If we receive adequate notice we can then make arrangements to have the house re-let, and avoid any problems associated with vacant units.

If there is a vacant dwelling in your estate, don't assume that we know about it. Tell Us! You can contact the Housing Department with the details. The sooner you do the sooner we can arrange to have it re-let.

Section 6

Resident Participation in Estate Management

When you were allocated a house by the Council, you became more than just a tenant. You became a member of the community in which you live. As such, the Council encourages you to become actively involved in your estate, eager to hear your views and suggestions on how it can be improved. To help you to become involved, the Council has launched Estate Management Initiatives.

What does Resident Participation in Estate Management involve?

The Council is currently involved in the process of resident participation in Estate Management and we want you to help establish an active Estate Forum in your estate or to support the estate management forum if there is already one in existence, in order to provide a better level of service in your estate and to encourage a greater level of tenant involvement.

The aim is to improve the overall co-ordination of services, to improve the physical appearance of your estate and to develop a Community Spirit in your estate. It will also help to achieve improved communication between tenants and the Council.

Will tenants be involved in drawing up Improvement plans for their estates?

The Resident Participation in Estate Management Initiative will also involve an examination and assessment of estates by the residents to identify problems and develop action plans for each estate, which will lead to an improvement in living conditions.

The preparation of and carrying out of these plans will involve the tenants and the statutory and voluntary bodies all working together for the betterment of the community.

How can I become involved?

We at Laois County Council want you as a tenant to participate and have a say in running your estate. Don't leave it to the Council, join with us by working through your Residents Association and help make your estate a better place to live. We will listen to what you have to say, after all you have expert local knowledge. If there is no Resident's Association operating in your area, and you and your neighbours are interested in establishing one, why not find out more by ringing our Tenant Liaison Officer (057-86 64043).

What can the Estate Management Officer do?

The Estate Management Officer is available to assist in forming and developing community organisations. This includes setting up and supporting existing Resident Associations.

Could my estate enter the Best Kept Estate Competition?

Yes. The Council will actively support your group in this, once it is benefiting the community as a whole.

Why not talk to your neighbours about this today. It is your estate, you have a say!

What can Residents Associations do?

The Council's Environment Department, along with the Housing Department and Estate Management Section, can help you to organise local clean-ups, present certificates to local children, arrange for talks in schools.

The Council will actively support your group once it is benefiting the community as a whole.

Other Estate Management activities include:

- Annual Camp CoCo Summer Camps for the younger members of our Local Authority Estates.
- Estate Soccer Leagues and Play Days.
- Estate Management Grants – available for to assist residents associations develop & improve their estates.
- Art and Drama workshops.

Section 7

Protecting Your Home

Garda statistics indicate that most house break-ins are carried out on the spur of the moment. There are a few simple steps that you can take to prevent a break-in.

DO'S

- (1) Ensure you have proper locks, bolts, catches on doors and windows.
- (2) Ask all callers for proof of their identity.
- (3) Always leave a light on when going out at night.
- (4) Put on your door chain before opening your doors to all callers.
- (5) Have a torch for emergency light at night.

DON'TS

- (1) Don't leave a window open for the cat at night.
- (2) Don't leave your keys under the front door mat or on a string.
- (3) Don't keep large sums of money in your house.
- (4) Don't struggle if your bag is snatched. It may not be worth the possible consequences.
- (5) Don't carry more money than is necessary on your person.

Never leave valuables lying around where they can be seen through a window.

Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries when you go on holiday and tell a neighbour that you will be away.

Thieves may try to gain entry to your home by posing as officials or workmen. Never let a stranger into your home unless you are certain of his/her identity. Take the following precautions:

- Ask to see the caller's identity card. All officials carry one and will be pleased to show it.
- Take time to look at the identity card. Examine the photograph and ask the caller to spell his/her name.
- If the caller does not have an identity card, ask them to call back later and use the extra time to check with the organisation they represent.
- Telephone the Gardai if you are suspicious.

If you are unfortunate enough to be burgled, it will improve your chances of getting property back if you have kept the serial numbers of equipment and taken photographs of your personal property, valuables, televisions, bicycles, etc.

Reach out!

Remember, your older or vulnerable neighbour who lives alone! He or she may need your help.

Be a good neighbour! Be aware! Care!

If you have any information about any crime, free phone

CRIMESTOPPERS at 1800 25 00 25

Your call is free.

You do not give your name.

You may receive a reward

Section 8

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Council has adopted a very strong position where acts of anti-social behaviour come to our attention. Offending tenants and/ or their families will have their home re-possessed. Evictions will be carried out in all cases where tenants or members of their household are involved in drug dealing or allow their dwelling to be used for drug dealing.

What happens if I disturb my neighbours?

You must make sure that you do not cause damage or become a nuisance to your neighbours. In particular, this means:

- No drugs.
- No criminal activity.
- No threats or violence.
- No harassment or abuse.
- No loud noise.

How will the Council deal with tenants who engage in anti-social behaviour?

Where incidents of anti-social behaviour come to our attention, the matter will be fully investigated and if proven, the Council will seek to initiate legal proceedings. This could result in you and your family being evicted from your home.

What can I do about anti-social neighbours?

If your neighbours are becoming a nuisance to you, and they are tenants of the Council, don't assume that we already know about it! If you cannot resolve the issue yourself, please inform the Housing Dept. (telephone 057 8664043), giving details of the nature of the complaint and if relevant the dates/time of the incidents concerned.

Your complaint will be treated with total confidentiality. We will investigate your complaint and if appropriate, refer it to the Gardai or relevant agency.

Together, we can make your neighbourhood a better place for you and your family.

Section 9

Danger of fire in the home

Your home is at risk of fire from:

- **Unattended cookers (particularly late at night).**
- **Cigarette Smoking.**
- **Matches, open fires, candles, heaters.**
- **Electrical appliances.**

Older people and young children are most often the victims of fire.

- Be sure to keep matches and lighters out of reach of children and do not leave young children alone in the dwelling.
- Use secure fire guards with open fires.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Switch off and unplug all appliances not in use at night.
- Install a smoke alarm and replace the battery regularly. It is preferable to have a smoke alarm both upstairs and downstairs. If you do not already have a smoke alarm, the Council will provide one free of charge.
- Only one electrical appliance should be plugged in to any outlet.
- At night, you should close doors to all rooms.
Don't open a door if you suspect there is a fire in the room.
- All gas and electrical appliances should be used and serviced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Christmas time - it is very important that particular care is taken with Christmas tree lights and any lighted decorations.

What do I do if a fire breaks out?

- **Your first priority is to get everyone out of the house and then call the fire brigade.**
- If your escape routes are blocked by fire/smoke, go into a room, close the door and stuff a blanket or carpet at the bottom of the door to keep out smoke. Call for help from the window and await the arrival of the fire brigade.
- **Do not evacuate from an upstairs window except as a last resort.**

What can I do if the chimney goes on fire?

- Call the fire brigade.
- Close doors and windows to reduce the draught. If possible, move furniture and carpets away from the fireplace. After a chimney fire, get an experienced builder to check it for damage and, if necessary, repair the chimney and fireplace before using it again.
Get the chimney cleaned at least twice a year.

What is the advice about open fires?

Use a fireguard and always check that it is in position before going to bed.

Never carry hot coals from one fireplace to another. Avoid banking fires too high.

Should special care be taken with gas cylinders?

Yes. Always keep cylinders upright and switch off at the regulator when not in use. Never seal ventilators as it is important that each room with a gas heater have adequate ventilation. **Gas cylinders should not be used inside.** Return empty cylinders promptly. Check flexible hoses and couplings regularly for signs of wear and tear. Keep all portable heaters well clear of curtains and furniture and place them where they cannot be knocked over. Gas or oil heaters should never be moved in use.

What should I do if my chip-pan goes on fire?

If a chip-pan catches fire, use a fire blanket or the correct extinguisher or smother the flames with a lid, large plate or a well dampened towel.

Do not attempt to use water to put out a chip-pan fire.

Never leave a chip-pan unattended. If you have to answer the phone/door, turn off the power and move the pan to a cold ring/hob.

Section 10

First Aid

First Aid is a treatment given to a patient for any injury, or sudden illness, before the arrival of an ambulance, doctor or other qualified person.

Bleeding and Wounds:

- To stop bleeding, firmly squeeze the sides of the wound together or apply pressure with the thumbs at the sides of the wound.
- Cleanse around and away from the wound, taking care not to disturb any blood clot.
- Apply and maintain pressure to the bleeding part with dressing.
- Cover with clean pad and bandage firmly.
- If bleeding is not controlled, apply more pads and increase the pressure with the hand or additional bandages.

If possible wear surgical gloves and avoid actual contact with blood.

Burns and Scalds:

If possible, cool the injured part immediately.

- DO NOT remove burned clothing
- DO NOT break blisters or apply ointments or oils.
- Take the patient to the hospital without delay.

Broken Bones:

Fractures should be moved as little as possible.

- Support the injured part at once.
- Upper limbs may be gently secured to the body in the most comfortable position.
- When a leg is fractured, leave casualty lying in as comfortable a position as possible and phone doctor or ambulance.
- If transport is essential, the injured limb may be secured to the sound one.

Poison:

If a patient is unconscious, DO NOT attempt to treat except with artificial respiration, if needed. Conscious casualties of:

Corrosive Poisons (which destroy tissues eg. acids. Signs – odour of the breath, pain in the mouth, vomiting, burning lips and mouth) should be given large quantities of milk or water to dilute the poison.

Shock:

- Reassure the casualty and lay them down.
- Loosen /Open tight clothing at neck, waist and chest.
- Wrap the patient in a blanket or coat but DO NOT OVERHEAT.
- Raise lower limbs if possible. Wet lips but DO NOT GIVE PATIENT A DRINK.
- Get to hospital as soon as possible.

Fainting:

- Lay patient down if possible, except in cases of injuries.

- Loosen tight clothing from around waist, neck and chest to try and ensure as much fresh air as possible.
- Otherwise, try and get patient to put their head between their legs.

Section 11

Accommodation Options

Laois County Council aims to provide a high standard of accommodation at a reasonable rent to qualified applicants in accordance with its Scheme of Priorities for Letting Accommodation, on the basis of our points system which is included for your information (see Appendix 1). We allocate accommodation in a fair and reasonable manner. In doing so, we hope we have satisfied your accommodation needs. However, changes in your household circumstances may mean that you may have to review your accommodation needs and you should be aware of all the options open to you.

SCHEME OF LETTING PRIORITIES FOR ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL.

The purpose of the Scheme of Letting Priorities is to provide a means for determining the order of priority to be afforded in the letting of Local Authority accommodation to persons whose needs have already been established in the County Council's last assessment or who are accepted for inclusion in the next assessment.

The scheme may be inspected by any person at the Aras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois during normal office hours and is included for your information at Appendix 1.

Conditions for Application

1. A housing application form must be completed in full. Incomplete application forms will be returned to the applicant.
2. The Council reserves the right to refuse consideration of any application where the applicant has given false or misleading information.
3. On receipt of fully completed application form, the application will be assessed by the Housing Department of Laois County Council.
4. All applications on medical grounds must be certified by a medical consultant.
5. Only medical conditions relevant to the applicant's housing needs will be taken into consideration.
6. The Council reserves the right to request and obtain information relevant to any application from An Garda Síochána, Criminal Assets Bureau, Health Services Executive, the Dept. for Social Protection and an approved housing body.
7. In the interests of Good Estate Management the Council reserves the right to suspend an application if the applicant(s) have a history of anti-social behaviour.
8. An application on compassionate grounds will only be considered if independently verified e.g. An Garda Síochána or Social Services. It remains at the Council's discretion to take any such report into consideration.
9. Priorities for the allocation of local authority accommodation shall be determined in accordance with the Points System which was adopted as part of the Laois County Council Housing Allocation Scheme. (Appendix 1)

10. In a situation where an equality of points exists, priority will be determined by lot.
11. Allocation of local authority accommodation is an Executive Function of the County Manager.
12. Single applicants without children must have reached the age of 18 years on or before the date of application.
13. An applicant must have reached the age of 18 years on or before the date of any allocation of property.
14. All offers of accommodation to applicants are provisional until the Tenancy Agreements are signed by the appropriate parties. In the interim should any information relevant to an application become known which was not previously disclosed the offer of accommodation may be rescinded.
15. Two refusals of reasonable offers of social housing over a twelve month period will result in a household being deemed to have forfeited their place on the waiting list for a period of twelve months. This will mean the household will not be offered social housing support for the suspension period and time will not be added on during this period 'time on list' or any other priority determining purposes.
16. Where an applicant has surrendered any form of local authority accommodation they must wait one year before they can re-apply.
17. Where an applicant has abandoned, has been evicted from or has vacated a property having caused malicious damage, they must wait five years before they can re-apply.
18. An applicant must have all rents and other charges due and payable in respect of any local authority accommodation fully discharged or an arrangement in place to re-pay the outstanding charges before an application will be considered.
19. Nothing in this Scheme shall operate to prevent the Council from providing accommodation where the need arises as a result of an emergency.

Transfers

A tenant of the Council may, with the consent of the Council, exchange the tenancy of his/her existing dwelling for the tenancy of another Council dwelling under the following conditions:

1. All rents and other charges due and payable in respect of their existing accommodation have been fully discharged.
2. The tenants have complied with all the conditions of the Letting Agreement.
3. In the opinion of the Council, the exchange must result in either tenant being appropriately accommodated
4. The tenants must not have engaged in any anti-social behaviour in the previous three years.
5. The tenants must have resided in their current dwelling for at least five years.

The Council may, in exceptional circumstances, waive compliance with any or all of the above conditions. The Council reserves the right to refuse any transfer request due to financial constraints.

Prioritisation of Transfer Applications

1. Single applications for transfers will be prioritised in accordance with Laois County Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities.
2. The date of application for a transfer will only be set after all conditions for a transfer have been met in the opinion of the Council.
3. Transfers will only be granted in the following circumstances:
 - Overcrowding.
 - Medical.
 - Applicants who wish to down size.

An application for a transfer on medical or social grounds will only be considered if independently verified e.g. An Garda Siochana or Social Services. It remains at the Council's discretion to take any such report into consideration.

Nothing shall prevent the Council from transferring tenants to another dwelling in the following situations:

1. Where there is a risk to the health and safety of the tenants
2. For reasons of redevelopment.

Succession of Tenancies

On the death of a tenant, the tenancy may be transferred to the tenant's partner/spouse or to a member of the Tenant's immediate family normally resident in the dwelling at the date of the tenant's death.

In determining whether or not the tenant's immediate family was normally resident in the dwelling on the date of the tenant's death, detail included on previous Rent Assessments will be taken into account.

Surrender of Tenancy

Tenancies must be surrendered in writing by each Tenant. The keys must only be surrendered to an employee of Laois County Council.

Dependents

In order to be taken into consideration, dependents must be permanently residing with the applicant/s and must continue to reside permanently with the applicant/s if Local Authority accommodation is offered.

Illegal Occupation

Applicants who take up illegal occupation of a Local Authority dwelling will not be considered for the tenancy of a dwelling unless such dwelling is willingly surrendered to the Council in the same condition it was prior to squatting.

A person who takes up illegal occupation of a Local Authority dwelling who has willingly surrendered the dwelling to the Council will only be reconsidered for inclusion on the Housing Waiting List at the discretion of the Council.

Former Tenant

Arrears of rent accrued by a former tenant must be fully cleared before any new application for accommodation will be considered.

The previous record of a former tenant will be taken into consideration in deciding on any new application for accommodation.

Termination of Application

Laois County Council reserves the right to terminate an application in the following circumstances:

- a) Failure to notify a change of address.
- b) Unavailability of applicant for assessment on more than two occasions.
- c) Failure to provide information necessary to enable an appropriate assessment of the applicants situation.
- d) Provision of false and misleading information.

Specified Categories of Need

The Council may from time to time, determine as they see fit, to set aside for persons of such category or categories as the Council may decide a particular number or a proportion of the dwellings becoming available for letting in new developments only. Where such a member or proportion is set aside, priority will be afforded to the specified categories in the letting of those dwellings.

The specified categories are as follows:

- 1. Single applicants
- 2. Elderly (over 65 years).
- 3. Disabled.

Downgrading of Accommodation

The Council, in assessing an application for accommodation, may reduce the priority of the applicant/s where the Council has reason to believe that he/she has deliberately or without good and sufficient reason, done or failed to do anything (other than an action or omission in good faith) in consequence of which the accommodation he/she is so occupying is less suitable for his/her adequate housing than other accommodation which it would have been or it would be reasonable for him/her to occupy.

Appeals

Every applicant has the right to appeal if they are not satisfied with the manner in which their application has been dealt with. The final decision on the appeal will be made by the appropriate Director of Services.

Who do I contact about the Disabled Person's Grant Scheme?

The Council may consider carrying out improvement or alterations to your dwelling for medical reasons under the Disabled Person's Grant Scheme. For more information, telephone the Housing Dept. at 057-8664083.

Section 13

Useful Telephone Numbers

Laois County Council Headquarters, Aras an Chontae, Portlaoise.

Tel: (057) 8664000 **Email:** corpaffairs@laoiscoco.ie
Fax: (057) 8622313 **Website:** www.laois.ie

Housing Department:

Tel: (057) 8664000 **Email:** housing@laoiscoco.ie

Other Departments/Sections based in Aras an Chontae:

The following are a list of our direct dial telephone numbers:

Reception	8664000	Loan Repayments	8664056
Road Design	8674352	Arts	8664013
Rent Repayments	8664090	Motor Taxation	8674306
Planning	8664032	Services Charges	8664055
Fire Charges	8664210	Housing	8664000
Sanitary Services	8674323	Reg. of Electors	8664105
Environment	8674321	Roads	8674352
Estate Management	8664043	Co. Dev. Board	8664107
Sports & Recreational Dept.	8674363	Rates	8664055
H.R. Department	8664236		

Emergency

Garda, Fire Brigade, Ambulance	999
Garda Freefone	1800 666 111
Health Board Executive	(057) 86 21135
General Hospital	(057) 86 21364
St. Fintan's Hospital	(057) 86 92873
E.S.B.	1850 372 999
Bord Gais	1850 205 050
Irish Water	1890 278 278

Other Useful telephone numbers:

Citizens Information Centre	(0761) 075590
M.A.B.S.	(0761) 072620
Lone Parents	(057) 86 21089
Childline Freefone	1800 666 666
A.R.C.H.	(01) 2951081
Cot Death Association	1850 391 391
Cura (Unwanted Pregnancy)	1850 622 626
Rape Crisis Centre Freefone	1800 32 32 32
Legal Aid	(057) 86 61366
LSPCA	087 6883333
Alcoholics Anonymous	(01) 8420700
Gamblers Anonymous	(01) 872 1133
National Association for Parent Support	(057) 86 61666

Personal Telephone Numbers

Family Doctor _____ Community Welfare Officer _____

Public Health Nurse _____ Garda Station _____

APPENDIX 1
Laois County Council
Scheme of Letting Priorities
Points System

Priorities for the allocation of Local Authority Accommodation shall be determined in accordance with the following points system:

		Maximum Points Allowed	Points Awarded
1.	Unfit		
	(a)	Structurally Unsound	24
	(b)	Dampness	4
	(c)	Electrical Work	4
	(d)	Inadequate Cooking Area	4
	(e)	Lack Of Heating	4
	(f)	Lack of Ventilation	4
	(g)	No water inside	4
	(h)	No toilet facilities inside	4
	(i)	No water inside or outside	8
	(j)	No toilet facilities inside or outside	8
2.	Overcrowding		
	(a)	Marginal (cubic capacity only)	8
	(b)	Bad (Sexual only)	10
	(c)	Gross overcrowding	16
3.	Payment for existing accommodation		
	(a)	Non-subsidised Rent	3
4.	Medical/Disabled/Handicapped		
	(a)	Moderate	4
	(b)	Serious	8
	(c)	Very Serious	12
		N.B. Only medical conditions relevant to housing needs will be taken into consideration.	
5.	Length of Time on Waiting List		
	(a)	1 Year	2
	(b)	2 Years	4
	(c)	3 Years	7
	(d)	4 Years	11
	(e)	5 Years	14
	(f)	For each year after fifth year	1 Extra
6.	No. of dependants (allow per dependant)		2
7.	Compassionate Grounds		10
	Reason:		
8.	Discounted Points (e.g. unreasonable refusal of Council housing, unsatisfactory case history, size of dwelling unsuitable etc.)		-30
	Reason:		

BE WINTER-READY



www.winterready.ie

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INTRODUCTION

We hope that this revised edition of our Winter Ready Booklet will assist households in preparing for severe weather and coping with it when it actually happens.

Remember that everyday tasks which we take for granted become more difficult or even hazardous in severe weather, yet by taking some simple steps you can reduce the impact of such events.

During periods of severe weather, it is important to obtain the latest information, by listening to the weather information and weather warnings from Met Éireann, usually delivered during the weather forecast. Information will also be available during severe weather on the Twitter page of the Office of Emergency Planning @emergencyIE.

We have also included contact details for organisations and agencies that can provide further guidance and assistance.

We encourage everyone to keep an eye on elderly neighbours and relatives during periods of severe weather. They will inevitably have more difficulty than usual in getting about, to buy food and medical supplies and to attend their medical appointments. Remember that they may not have access to the latest information from the internet and social media, so they will really benefit from ongoing personal contact.

The booklet is published by the Office of Emergency Planning, on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.

We have a lot more information and useful links on our website, www.winterready.ie

Tá leagan Gaeilge den leabhrán seo ar fáil freisin.

Our main message is simple, - Be Prepared, Stay Safe and know where to find help should you need it.

Office of Emergency Planning

To be Winter Ready, you need to be aware of the weather conditions in your area, so that you can PREPARE

Met Éireann weather forecasts are available on RTÉ (radio and TV), on many of the independent local and national radio stations and on www.met.ie.

When a Severe Weather Warning (level red) is in operation it will also be issued to the broadcast media and to Local Authorities.

Weather Warnings are presented in three categories:

Weather Alert - Be Aware

The concept behind YELLOW level weather alerts is to notify those who are at risk because of their location and/or activity, and to allow them to take preventative action. It is implicit that YELLOW level weather alerts are for weather conditions that do not pose an immediate threat to the general population, but only to those exposed to risk by nature of their location and/or activity.

Weather Warning - Be Prepared

This category of ORANGE level weather warnings is for weather conditions which have the capacity to impact significantly on people in the affected areas. The issue of an Orange level weather warning implies that all recipients in the affected areas should prepare themselves in an appropriate way for the anticipated conditions.

Severe Weather Warning - Take Action

The issue of RED level severe weather warnings should be a comparatively rare event and implies that recipients take action to protect them-selves and/or their properties; this could be by moving their families out of the danger zone temporarily, by staying indoors or by other specific actions aimed at mitigating the effects of the weather conditions.

You can get more details on Met Éireann's weather alert, weather warning and severe weather warning on www.met.ie which also has the latest national and regional forecasts.

Remember

Always remain at a safe distance while viewing or taking photographs of crashing waves in severe weather

The HOME in Winter

Be Prepared

- Have a small supply of non perishable, easy-to-prepare foods
- Keep extra supplies of essential medication in case it is difficult to get to the doctor/pharmacy
- Have an adequate supply of fuel for heating/cooking and if possible a suitable alternative should the main supply fail
- Have batteries for torches in the event of power cuts
- Have candles and matches. Candles should always be placed away from draughts in proper candleholders. Never leave a burning candle unattended
- Have a water container to ensure a supply of drinking water
- Know how to turn off your water supply
- Keep mobile phones charged up - have local emergency numbers in your phone
- Have a suitable snow shovel (but any shovel or spade will do)

Are you ready for snow and freezing conditions?

- Snow clearing is strenuous—do not attempt it unless you have a reasonable standard of fitness and do not have an underlying medical condition. Wear suitable clothing and boots or shoes with a good grip
- Clear the snow earlier in the day - do not use boiling water as it will freeze over and cause a hazard

Be Prepared – prevent your water supply freezing up

- Mains water supply to premises, i.e. external stopcock - the depth from ground-level to the stopcock should not be less than 600mm. If required, seek professional advice on having the stopcock lowered or protected. The same applies to the line from the stopcock to your property. Be aware that the level may vary as it nears your property
- If you have a meter installed by Irish Water, a frost plug has been inserted in the meter boundary box to prevent the meter and stop-cock from freezing
- If no meter is installed by Irish Water, to prevent stopcocks freezing, open the stopcock chamber and remove any water. Fill the chamber with non-absorbent material to provide insulation. Do not use absorbent material as it too will freeze when wet

- Do not leave taps running as this merely wastes a valuable resource and you will incur additional costs if you are on metered water charges. More information at www.water.ie
- If you are leaving your property unattended for a period of more than a day or two, you should shut off the water supply to the property from the external stopcock (while ensuring that any water-dependent appliances or facilities are also shut-off)

Be Prepared - avoid Frozen Pipes

Ensure all exposed pipes are adequately insulated. This includes pipes in the attic even where the attic floor has been well insulated

- Insulate or wrap a towel around an outside tap
- Leave a light on in the attic
- Open attic trap door to allow heat in
- Leave heating on for longer periods at lower settings
- Warmth offers the best protection against frozen pipes so keep your house warm

Frozen mains water supply

- If your supply is frozen, be cautious with the use of heating systems, washing machines or other water-dependent appliances or facilities
- If in doubt, contact a qualified plumber for advice

Water Leaks

- Water supply in vacant premises and holiday homes should be shut off and drained down in preparation for winter
- Keyholders - check premises regularly for possible leaks
- If a leak is detected:
 - Turn off water supply –stop valve is usually under the kitchen sink
 - Turn on cold taps to drain the system
 - Turn off central heating
- Turn off electricity supply at main fuse board if leak is near electrical appliances
- Call a qualified plumber and/or electrician

Advice for the Elderly and their Families and Neighbours

In winter it can be difficult for everyone to get about and conduct day to day activities. It is even more difficult for the elderly and other vulnerable people.

Keeping Well and Warm

- Keep warm, eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need. Keep active indoors
- Have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in your home
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list beside your phone

Personal Safety – Staying Safe

- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking outside during the cold weather
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall
- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you visit your doctor for a check up

Fall prevention in your home

- Leave a low energy light on at night time, preferably one with a high light output
- Use a non-slip shower or bath mat
- Make sure wires or cords from lamps, telephones etc. do not trail where you walk
- Arrange furniture so that you can easily move around all your rooms
- Remove rugs or use non-slip tape or backing so rugs will not slip
- Consider installing hand rails on both sides of the stairs

Keep safe this winter – for more information visit www.hse.ie

Keeping an eye on the elderly and infirm

- Try to call on elderly relatives and neighbours, and offer to assist them in severe weather.
- Ensure that they have sufficient supplies of food and medications
- Ensure that they have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in their homes

- If you have any doubts about the safety of an elderly or infirm person seek the assistance of the Garda Síochána or local social services

Flooding

Advance planning

Find out if you live in a flood-prone area

- **Speak** to neighbours and your local authority
- **Consult** the OPW flood mapping available for your area (www.maps.opw.ie and www.floodmaps.ie). The Office of Public Works has also provided a large amount of useful information on the website www.flooding.ie

If you DO live in a flood-prone area, there are a number of steps that you can take to make your property more resilient to flooding.

- **Assess where** could a flood enter your house, are bedrooms on ground floors or in basements, etc.
- **Prepare** a family flood plan for your household
- **Check your home insurance** - to see if you are covered for flood damage
- Find out if there is a Flood Emergency Plan for your area from your local authority.

Consider if measures such as retrofitting to provide flood barriers, sealing basements, and purchasing floodgates are required.

Be prepared - Inside your house

- Move valuables and other items to safety. Place them above the flood level or upstairs
- Put sandbags at any openings where the water could gain access
- Turn off gas and electricity

Be prepared – Outside your house

- Move your car to high ground if possible
- Remember that floodwater could get into your garage so move any chemicals or fuel to ensure that they do not spill into the floodwater and cause an additional hazard
- Weigh down any manhole covers with sandbags or heavy objects. These could open during a flood and cause a hazard
- Close off the flow valves on propane tanks, oil drums, or other fuel containers that supply your home through pipes and fittings

- Unplug any exterior electrical connections such as outdoor lighting, pond pumps and filters

Evacuation

Despite all precautions, it may still be necessary to evacuate your home or business

- Be prepared to evacuate your home or business. Protect yourself, your family and others that need your help
- Have warm waterproof clothing and wellingtons ready
- Have medication to hand (if needed)
- Check water/food stocks
- Please co-operate with emergency services and local authorities.

Flooding - General Safety Advice

- **Don't** try to walk or drive through floodwater unless you are absolutely sure of its depth
- If possible avoid contact with floodwater as it may be contaminated or polluted, for example with sewage
- Take care if you have to walk through shallow water – manhole covers may have come off and there may be other underwater hazards that you cannot see
- Never try to swim through fast-flowing water – you may get swept away or struck by an object in the water
- Neighbours with high vehicles such as tractors might be asked for help in getting through flooded areas

Road safety

Is Your Vehicle Winter-Ready?

You should get your car serviced before winter sets in to make sure it is ready for the conditions which will undoubtedly arrive when least expected! There are some things you can do yourself:

- Lights - Make sure all your indicators and headlamps are clean and working
- Liquids - Make sure the water reservoir is up to the maximum mark and correctly mixed with anti-freeze. You may also need to top up your coolant and screen wash
- Oil - Check your dipstick and top up the oil if necessary. Look for signs of leakages on the ground under the car
- Electrics - Check your dashboard before and after starting the engine. Listen for a weak battery and replace if necessary
- Windscreen wipers - you should clean them regularly and replace them every 12 months
- Tyres - Check your tyre treads and pressure, including the spare. While the minimum legal limit is 1.6mm, a minimum tread of 3mm is advised for winter driving
- Safety Assist - Check your vehicle's owner's manual and find out if it has any safety assist technology e.g. ABS

Be Prepared - Emergency equipment to have in your car

- High Visibility Vest
- A hazard warning triangle
- A torch with batteries - check it monthly
- Tow rope
- A shovel
- Jump Leads
- A Fuel Canister
- Spare fuses and bulbs
- De-icing equipment (Both for glass and door locks)
- First aid kit
- A Map or GPS (Charged)
- Appropriate clothing and footwear in case you have to leave your vehicle
- Have a charged mobile phone

- Some simple supplies to sustain yourself (drink and food)

Planning a journey in winter

Do you really have to travel by car? You could:

- Consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve
- Use public transport where available

If you really have to travel by road, be prepared for severe conditions

- Ensure your vehicle has a more than adequate supply of fuel for the journey. If possible, keep your fuel tank full in winter
- Check your emergency equipment
- Allow extra time and drive with caution. Let someone know your route and when you expect to arrive

Check to see if there are any problems on your intended route before you leave. Information is available from the National Roads Authority, (NRA) website www.nratraffic.ie and you can follow them on Twitter @NRATraffic. You can register with the NRA to receive email alerts for a chosen journey, and there is also an NRA app available to registered users

- You could also check the AA Roadwatch website www.aaroadwatch.ie or follow them on Twitter @aaroadwatch. Listen to TV or radio bulletins and check the weather forecast. Remember that the best road conditions are likely to occur between 10am and 4pm
- If you do not know your route, and are using SatNav/GPS, be sure it does not bring you over a dangerous route, such as across mountainous terrain or along narrow back-roads, which may be hazardous due to snow and ice. e.g. Sally Gap, Co Wicklow or Barnesmore Gap, Co Donegal. Do not rely totally on a SatNav/GPS, look at your route on a map

Driving in hazardous conditions

Remember the following serious hazards:

- Snow and ice will always be worse in mountainous areas and higher ground – try to route around such places. There is information about road conditions and road temperatures on www.nratraffic.ie
- Beware of high sided vehicles in strong winds, particularly when over-taking. If you are driving a high sided vehicle try to anticipate exposed sections of roadway where winds will be stronger

- Beware of fallen trees or other debris
- Leaving your vehicle is dangerous, wear a high visibility jacket and use your hazard lights to enable other traffic to avoid collision with your vehicle. However, on a motorway, it is safer to get out of your car and stand behind the safety barrier. Call for assistance immediately

You, Your Farm and the Winter

Stay Safe

Farming is always a dangerous occupation and it is even more so when severe weather arrives.

The last few winters have brought some very severe conditions with heavy snowfalls and extensive flooding in some areas.

Now is the time to PLAN in order to minimise the effects of severe weather on your farm and your family.

Look after your Personal Safety

- Before going out on your land always tell someone where you are going, and how long you will be gone for
- Wear suitable layers of clothing
- Carry a charged mobile phone and a torch
- Never use a stand-by generator indoors, as fumes from the engine can be lethal
- Be sure that equipment (for example, a chainsaw) which you may not have used for some time is fully serviceable and that you use it correctly. See www.hsa.ie for more detail

Cold Weather and Snow

- Plan how you will get food and water to your stock
- Prevent your machinery and water supplies freezing up:
- Have thermostatically controlled heaters in the pump house
- An insulation blanket/plastic sheet placed at the entrance to the milking parlour may help prevent milking machines freezing up
- Drain wash-down pumps
- Check the anti-freeze levels in all your engines
- Have a plan to clear routes around your farm buildings, and a stock of gritting material and salt

- When searching for animals in snow, wear high-visibility clothing so you can be easily seen

Looking After Livestock

- Do a fodder budget in spring to establish feed requirements for next winter
- Build in a reserve of 1-2 bales per head, particularly on heavy land types
- Maximise grass growth during the main growing season to build a reserve of winter feed
- Get your silage analysed. Meal supplementation rates must be based on silage quality
- Have grit and salt available to ensure access to sheds in the event of snow or icy conditions
- Have a plan to deal with a power outages

Flooding on the Farm

Read the flooding section of this booklet carefully. Get more information from the website www.flooding.ie

If your farm is prone to flooding:

- Move your livestock to areas you can access if flooding risk is high
- Carefully assess the depth of floods before driving through them
- Only use suitable vehicles if you have to drive through floods
- Secure valuable equipment and fuel supplies in suitable locations so that they are not ruined by water

Other Hazards

Be careful when using equipment which you may not have used for some time:

- Be sure that it has been serviced properly and is in good working order
- Do not “risk it” - if you do not really know how to use the equipment get someone to advise you or find out how to use it
- Particular care is needed while using chainsaws - see the booklet “Safe Working with Timber and Chainsaws” on the HSA website www.hsa.ie

Electricity

Get a copy of the booklet “Farm Well....Farm Safely” from the ESB Networks website www.esb.ie - it tells you all you need to know about using electric equipment on your farm.

- Stand-by generators. Special regulations apply to the connection and use of generators
- The connection must be installed by a qualified electrician
- ESB must be notified of proposed operation of a generator
- Incorrect connection can cause a 'back-feed' posing a risk to yourself, other consumers and maintenance staff

Business Sector

Preparing Your Business for Severe Weather

Every business has a number of challenges to overcome to ensure business continuity in the event of severe weather. Preparation is key to minimising disruption during such events.

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Forfás have prepared a practical checklist for the business sector which will outline key issues to address as part of business continuity planning for, and in response to, severe weather events. The checklist is available in the document Business Continuity Planning in Severe Weather at www.forfas.ie.

Practical considerations on how a severe weather event can affect operations include:

Impact on Place of Business Consider how various severe weather scenarios can affect the place of work i.e. the site and buildings.

- Is the location at risk of flooding?
- Are access points liable to difficulties e.g. access roads positioned on a slope at risk of ice?
- Are water pipes insulated (including in and around vacant buildings)?
- Ensure that the business has information and contact details regarding key services including local authorities
- Review insurance cover and contact insurance advisors in relation to any concern a business may have

Impact on Employees

- Consider the potential impact as a result of employees being unable to attend the place of work
- Consider how alternative work practices could minimise disruption e.g. teleworking, shift-work and consider how the Human Resource Management practices in the business can cater for disruption
- Consider what measures need to be put in place to ensure employee safety across the place of work

- Ensure the business has up-to-date employee contact details and a communications plan
- Ensure that management responsibility is clearly assigned for planning and making preparations; identify business critical roles and develop plans for ensuring continuity

Impact on Customers

- Consider how customers may be impacted upon
- Consider the business impact as a result of lower custom
- Consider alternative means to serving customers and what strategies can be employed to minimise disruption e.g. online commerce
- Have in place a communications plan for customers
- Consider how customer safety can be assured within the public areas of the business
- Assess how surrounding pavements and access points can be cleared in the event of snow and ice and make preparations for suitable equipment being available

Impact on Suppliers

- Consider the impact of a disruption to supplies and review stockpiles
- Liaise with key suppliers and assess their preparedness in the event of severe weather affecting their businesses
- Consider especially time-sensitive supplies
- Consider alternative transportation routes and logistics channels
- Consider safety of suppliers of goods and services, which may entail access to less frequented areas of premises

Schools and Severe Weather

The following is provided as guidance for school management.

Be prepared, Be informed, Be vigilant

Preparation

Schools should conduct a pre-event evaluation of what should be, or could be, in place to ensure the opening of the school in the event of severe weather. Areas for consideration are maintenance of school premises and utilities, salting and gritting and transport to and from school. Access in the school to a battery operated radio and flashlights should be put in place.

Schools should ensure that every member of staff is clear as to their role and responsibilities during severe weather including in the event of a school closure. A member of staff should be assigned to monitor weather conditions and to contact the principal response agencies and school transport services where required.

Included in the school's plan for severe weather should be the proposed responses and roles which will apply in the event of a Red level weather warning from Met Éireann.

Communications

Schools should ensure to have the relevant contact details of the principal response agencies for their area, including An Garda Síochána, fire brigade and local authorities and other appropriate services. Schools should also have contact details for the transport services serving their school. These details should be checked regularly and kept up-to-date.

Schools should establish communications with neighbouring schools to ensure, as far as practicable, a unified local response to severe weather events may be implemented. It is noted however, that while schools in an area may try to co-ordinate their decisions, the circumstances can vary between individual schools in close proximity and may on occasions lead to different decisions being taken by schools.

Most schools use a text messaging service to communicate with parents and staff. Local radio, the school's website or social media may also be useful to alert parents and students to school conditions and closure should this arise.

State Examinations

In the event of severe weather during scheduled state examinations the State Examinations Commission will communicate with schools to put in place alternative arrangements.

Closing a School

The decision to close a school rests with the school management authority taking into consideration the full guidance and direction available from the principal response agencies, especially An Garda Síochána. Any decision to close is taken in the interest of child safety, having assessed the local risks and having consulted, as appropriate, with school transport operators.

Some of the issues that schools take into account include:

- conditions in the school itself
- the capacity of the school to ensure the health and safety of students whilst in school
- the ability of parents, students, staff and school transport services to safely negotiate local road conditions to reach the school
- guidance and direction from the principal response agencies

Guidance on time lost due to unforeseen closures as a result of severe weather is set out in circular 16/2014 which is available on the Department's website www.education.ie.

Weather Warnings from Met Éireann

Schools should monitor weather forecasts in order to be prepared for any severe weather which may affect the school. During periods of severe weather, schools should assess the situation using the above guidance. Schools should be prepared, keep themselves informed and remain vigilant.

In recent years Met Éireann has introduced colour coded weather warnings as follows:

- Status Yellow – be aware
- Status Orange – be prepared
- Status Red – take action

Schools should respond appropriately to such warnings using the above guidance.

It should be borne in mind that there may also be weather events which may be fast moving with little warning. For example, consider the case of Storm Darwin in February 2014 where Met Éireann had issued a Status Red alert for the Cork and Kerry regions; however, on that occasion the weather moved rapidly across the southern half of the country affecting a number of other counties.

There may also be Status Orange weather warnings that may require action to be taken because of the particular local circumstances, e.g. in areas prone to flooding or areas located on the coast. Any assessment taken by the school for actions necessary should be guided by local knowledge and experience and by way of advice from the principal response agencies.

Status Red Weather Warning

All weather warnings of Status Red will require some action on behalf of schools. Schools need to assess the potential impact of such weather events taking account of past experiences and in light of advice on the current event from the principal response agencies in their area.

A Status Red weather warning for heavy rain may be particularly relevant if the local area is prone to flooding. A Status Red warning related to ice or snow which may compact may cause local issues due to the location of the school and/or the routes taken to reach the school.

Status Red Weather Warning for Wind

Schools should note in particular Status Red weather warnings where strong winds or storm conditions are forecasted. Due to the high degree of unpredictability as to the impact of the weather associated with such a Status Red warning on local conditions, schools should use the following guidance to assist them in making their assessment. Status Red weather warning for wind related conditions may be given in advance of a school opening or it may arise during the day while a school is underway.

Advance Warning of Status Red

Following consultation at a national level with the Office of Emergency Planning and the management bodies for schools, the Department of Education and Skills' advice

to schools is that they should consider not opening where a Status Red weather warning related to wind is forecast to coincide with the period/s during which students and staff would be expected to be travelling to and from school.

Whether the school should open later in the day where an improvement to the weather is forecast is a decision which should be taken in consultation with An Garda Síochána, the local authorities, school transport services and other appropriate agencies based in the school's area.

Warning of Status Red that arises during the school day

Where the Status Red weather warning related to wind is issued when the school is already underway with students and staff present, the school management should immediately contact An Garda Síochána, the school transport services and other appropriate agencies for advice on whether it may be safe to undertake journeys from the school or when such journeys should commence. Consideration should also be taken as to the safety of parents undertaking journeys to the school to collect children.

Where a decision may have to be taken on health and safety grounds based on the advice available to the school for students and staff to remain on the school premises during a Status Red warning related to wind, then schools should plan for such an eventuality by considering how students and staff can be accommodated within the school while awaiting an improvement in the weather. Such decisions should be taken based on the health and safety of all concerned taking account of the prevailing and forecast weather conditions in the vicinity of the school.

Contact Information

Emergency Services

If you have an emergency please phone the emergency services at

112 or 999

In the event of any emergency on water, including offshore, along the coastline, on inland waterways, lakes or rivers, call **112 or 999 and ask for the Coast Guard.**

Remember to have phone numbers for your doctor, chemist, children's schools, local authority, Garda station, service providers and family members conveniently to hand so that you can locate them easily should an emergency arise.

Services

ESB Networks LoCall 1850 372 999

Bord Gais LoCall 1850 20 50 50

Irish Water LoCall 1890 278 278

Weather Forecast

You can obtain the latest weather forecast from the following sources:

Visit the homepage of Met Éireann website: www.met.ie

Listen to national and local radio hourly news bulletins

Watch weather reports after TV news bulletins (Aertel pages 160 - 163)

To see a five-day forecast from Met Éireann

Met Éireann website: www.met.ie/forecasts/5day-ireland.asp

To see the Rainfall radar from Met Éireann

Met Éireann website: www.met.ie/latest/rainfall_radar.asp

HSE Map Centre

The Health Service Executive has a facility on the homepage of its web-site www.hse.ie called Map Centre. You can use this facility to locate health services in your area. Just enter your address and choose an option to find your nearest hospital, pharmacy, doctor, Garda station, nursing home or dentist. Directions are provided from your home to the required service.

Transport

The website www.dttas.ie provides links to all public transport providers. Click on Severe Weather Updates on the homepage and go to your required area of

information. During disruption, the individual transport provider sites are updated on a continuous basis.

The following are contact details for Public Transport providers. You should also keep to hand contact information for your local private transport operators.

Bus

Dublin Bus Routes – Customer Service Number - (01) 8734222 Twitter: @dublinbusnews

Facebook: /dublinbusnews

Bus Éireann Intercity/Commuter Bus Services Twitter: @buseireann Facebook: /buseireann

Bus Éireann Travel Centres

Ballina	(096) 71800
Cavan	(049) 4331353
Cork	(021) 4508188
Drogheda	(041) 9835023
Dublin	(01) 8366111
Dundalk	(042) 9334075
Galway	(091) 562000
Killarney	(064) 6630011
Letterkenny	(074) 9121309
Limerick	(061) 313333
Monaghan	(047) 82377
Sligo	(071) 9160066
Stranorlar	(074) 9131008
Tralee	(066) 7164700
Waterford	(051) 879000

Bus Éireann School Transport Offices

For Services in Counties	Contact Office	Phone Numbers
Westmeath, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon,	Athlone	(090) 6473277
Laois		
Mayo	Ballina	(096) 71816
Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Meath	Dublin	(01) 8302222
Louth, Monaghan, Cavan	Dundalk	(042) 9355069
		(042) 9355065
Clare, Tipperary North, Limerick	Limerick	(061) 217484
Galway	Galway	(091) 537694
		(091) 537512
Sligo, Leitrim	Sligo	(071) 9160440
Donegal	Stranorlar	(074) 9131008
Waterford, Tipperary South, Carlow,	Waterford	(051) 873401

Kilkenny, Wexford
Kerry
Rail

Tralee

(066) 7164750

Iarnrod Éireann incl. Intercity/Dart/Commuter Rail – Customer Service Number
– 1850 366 222

Twitter:@irishrail **Facebook:** /iarnrodeireann

Luas Services – Customer Service Number – 1800 300 604

Twitter:@luas **Facebook:** /luas

Air

For Arrivals/Departure Information visit the websites: www.daa.ie,

www.dublinairport.com, www.corkairport.com, www.shannonairport.ie

See: **Aertel** pages 571 - 576

Twitter: @daa, @corkairport, @dublinairport, @shannonairport

Airport	Website	Phone Numbers
Dublin Airport	www.dublinairport.com	(01) 8141111
Cork Airport	www.corkairport.com	(021) 4313131
Shannon Airport	www.shannonairport.com	(061) 712000
Ireland West Airport	www.irelandwestairport.com	(094) 9368100
Knock		
Waterford Airport	www.flywaterford.com	(051) 846600
Kerry Airport	www.kerryairport.com	(066) 9764644
Sligo Airport	www.sligoairport.com	(071) 9168280
Donegal Airport	www.donegalairport.ie	(074) 9548284
Aer Arann Islands	www.aerarannislands.ie	(091) 593034
Belfast International	www.belfastairport.com	+44 (0) 28 9448 4848
Airport		
George Best Belfast	www.belfastcityairport.com	+44 (0) 28 9093 9093
City Airport		
City of Derry	www.cityofderryairport.com	+44 (0) 28 7181 0784
Airport		

Sea

For Arrivals/Departure Information visit the following websites:

Service	Website	Phone Numbers
Irish Ferries	www.irishferries.com	0818 300 400
StenaLine	www.stenaline.ie	(01) 2047777
P&O Ferries	www.poferries.com	(01) 6869467
Fastnet Line	www.fastnetline.com	(021) 4378892
Brittany Ferries	www.brittanyferries.ie	(021) 4277801
Celtic Link	www.celticlinkferries.com	(053) 9162688

City and County Councils

Council	Website	Phone Numbers	
Office Hours		Out of Office Hours	
Carlow Co.	www.carlow.ie	(059) 917 0300	1890 500 333
Cavan Co.	www.cavancoco.ie	(049) 437 8300	087 285 8177
Clare Co.	www.clarecoco.ie	(065) 682 1616	087 416 9496
Cork Co.	www.corkcoco.ie	(021) 427 6891	(021) 497 1411
Cork City	www.corkcity.ie	(021) 492 4000	(021) 496 6512
Donegal Co.	www.donegalcoco.ie	(074) 917 2222	Water: (074) 917 2399
			Roads: (074) 917 2288
Dublin City	www.dublincity.ie	(01) 222 2222	(01) 679 6186
Dun Laoghaire /	www.dlrcoco.ie	(01) 205 4700	(01) 677 8844
Rathdown Co.			
Fingal Co.	www.fingalcoco.ie	(01) 890 5000	(01) 873 1415
Galway Co.	www.galway.ie	(091) 509 000	(091) 506 069
Galway City	www.galwaycity.ie	(091) 536 400	(091) 536 400
Kerry Co.	www.kerrycoco.ie	(066) 718 3500	(066) 718 3500
Kildare Co.	www.kildare.ie/countycoun	(045) 980 200	1890 50 03 33
	cil		
Kilkenny Co.	www.kilkennycoco.ie	(056) 779 4000	1890 252 654
Laois Co.	www.laois.ie	(057) 866 4000	1890 837 273
Leitrim Co.	www.leitrimcoco.ie	(071) 962 0005	(071) 962 0005*
Limerick	www.lcc.ie	(061) 496 000	(061) 419 226
City&Co.			
Longford Co.	www.longfordcoco.ie	(043) 334 3300	1850 211 525
Louth Co.	www.louthcoco.ie	(042) 933 5457	1890 202 203
Mayo Co.	www.mayococo.ie	(094) 902 4444	(094) 903 4705
Meath Co.	www.meath.ie	(046) 909 7000	1890 445 335
Monaghan Co.	www.monaghan.ie	(047) 30 500	087 650 1833
			(Castleblayney)
			087 687 3154
			(Carrickmacross)
			087 204 1672 (Clones)
			087 273 7193 (Emyvale)
Offaly Co.	www.offaly.ie	(057) 934 6800	1890 750 750
Roscommon Co.	www.roscommoncoco.ie	(090) 663 7100	(090) 663 7100*
Sligo Co.	www.sligococo.ie	(071) 911 1111	Roads:
			087 260 0111 (Town)
			087 778 9935 (County)
			Water: 087 290 2172
South Dublin Co.	www.sdcc.ie	(01) 414 9000	(01) 457 4907
Tipperary Co.	www.tipperarycoco.ie	0761 06 50 00	1890 923948
Waterford	www.waterfordcoco.ie	0761 10 20 20	0761 10 20 20
City&Co.			
Westmeath Co.	www.westmeathcoco.ie	(044) 933 2000	(044) 933 2000
Wexford Co.	www.wexford.ie/wex	(053) 919 6000	1890 666 777
Wicklow Co.	www.wicklow.ie	(0404) 20 100	(0404) 20 100

Important Phone Numbers

Doctor
Veterinary Surgeon
Dentist
Neighbour
Other Emergency Contact
School
Garda Síochána 999 or 112
Fire/Ambulance 999 or 112

Service/Coast Guard
Service Providers
Gas
Electric
Water
County Council

Be Winter-Ready Booklet

The booklet can be downloaded from the website www.winterready.ie or by writing to The Office of Emergency Planning, National Emergency Co-Ordination Centre, Agriculture House (2 East), Kildare Street, Dublin 2

An Irish language version is also available. Copies are available by contacting the Office of Emergency Planning

The contents of these pages are provided as an information guide only. They are intended to enhance public access to information for preparing and dealing with severe weather events. While every effort is made in preparing material for publication no responsibility is accepted by or on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning or the Office of Emergency Planning for any errors, omissions or misleading statements on these pages or any site to which these pages connect.

**www.winterready.ie
Twitter: @emergencyIE
LoCall: 1890 252 736 or 0761 001 608
e-mail: oepe@defence.ie**