



Republic of Mauritius

Protocol on Heavy Rainfall for the Public Sector



Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
...for a professional public service committed to excellence

DISCLAIMER

This Protocol serves as guidelines for providing practical advice to Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations in times of heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall. No civil or criminal liability shall be attached to any person and/or organisations in the execution of their roles, responsibilities and actions associated with this Protocol.

The Protocol may be subject to amendments in the light of changing circumstances.

ABBREVIATIONS

HR	-	Human Resources
HRC	-	Heavy Rainfall Committee
MCSAR	-	Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
NDRRMC	-	National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre
NEOC	-	National Emergency Operations Command
NCC	-	National Crisis Committee
NTA	-	National Transport Authority
O/C	-	Officer-in-Charge

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. OBJECTIVE	1
3. APPLICABILITY	1
4. REQUIREMENTS	1 - 3
4.1 IMPLEMENTATION	3 - 4
5. ENFORCEMENT OF PROTOCOL	4
6. HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING: WORK ARRANGEMENTS	5 - 7
7. LOCALISED HEAVY RAINFALL	7
8. GENERAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS	8
9. SPECIAL PROVISIONS	8
10. GENERAL PREPAREDNESS BY MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENTS AND PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH HEAVY RAINFALL/LOCALISED HEAVY RAINFALL	9
ANNEX I MAIN CONTACT POINTS	
ANNEX II UNDERTAKING TO LEAVE OFFICE	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mauritius, a tropical island, by virtue of its topography is usually affected by heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall during the summer months. Heavy rainfall may not always be generalised throughout the island, localised heavy rainfall is also a common feature and has proved to be life threatening.
- 1.2 Heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall may cause hazards such as flash floods in any locality, water accumulations in flood prone areas, overflow of rivulets, streams and major rivers, landslides, etc., which may cause major obstructions, severe traffic disruptions and in turn difficulties for people to have access to their sites of work.
- 1.3 While the education sector has its own Protocol for closing of schools given its specificity and in view of past experiences of confusing situations relating mainly to the release of staff and absence from work, it has been decided that an appropriate Protocol relating to heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall be drawn up for employers and employees of the public sector.

2. OBJECTIVE

This Protocol seeks to provide advice and practical guidelines on work arrangements in times of heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall and aims at ensuring the safety of employees and service continuity.

3. APPLICABILITY

The Protocol is applicable to employees of Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations, **except** for those:

- in the essential services;
- operating on roster, shift and staggered hours;
- whose services are required in connection with extreme weather conditions; and
- where such Protocol already exists.

As regards organisations operating on roster, shift and staggered hours, **other than those of the essential services**, the Supervising Officers may consider drawing up a protocol and work arrangement along the same lines to meet their specific needs.

4. REQUIREMENTS

(a) For the proper implementation of the Protocol:

- (i) A Heavy Rainfall Committee (HRC) should be set up at the level of each Ministry/Department/Public Sector Organisation to be chaired by the Supervising Officer.
- (ii) A Desk Officer to be designated by the Supervising Officer.

- (iii) A list of employees be drawn up and kept updated:
 - region wise;
 - with mobility problems such as those who are pregnant or physically handicapped; and
 - by address, starting with those who live furthest from the place of work to those living nearby.
- (iv) An updated list of flood prone areas be kept readily available.
- (v) Plans/release arrangements for employees be prepared and kept ready.
- (vi) List of contact persons and organisations be drawn and updated.

(b) **The composition, terms and reference and responsibilities of the HRC:**

- The HRC should be chaired by the Supervising Officer and comprise, *inter-alia*, an officer of the Ministry/Department/Public Sector Organisation responsible for Health and Safety and the Officer-in-Charge (O/C) of the Human Resources (HR) section.
- The HRC would be responsible to decide on such actions as deemed necessary for the smooth release, evacuation and safety of employees during heavy rainfall.
- Whenever a Heavy Rainfall Warning is issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS), the HRC should:
 - (i) convene an urgent meeting to take stock of the prevailing situation;
 - (ii) keep watch on the evolution of the situation and associated risks;
 - (iii) take stock of the number of employees having attended duty in their respective organisations; and
 - (iv) decide on such arrangements/course of action, as appropriate, to facilitate implementation of the Protocol throughout the Ministry/Department/Public Sector Organisation, including outstations and divisions.

(c) **The Desk Officer shall have the following main responsibilities:**

- (i) to be the contact point for employees and Heads of units/sections/divisions/outstations;
- (ii) to disseminate information from HRC to Heads of units/sections/divisions/outstations;

- (iii) to provide relevant information to the HRC, as and when required;
 - (iv) to act as liaison officer with the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (MCSAR) in matters pertaining to release of employees during heavy rainfall;
 - (v) to ensure that the required lists are updated; and
 - (vi) to forward situation reports to the National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC).
- (d) **The O/C, HR Section of Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations shall have the following main responsibilities:**
- (i) to draw up the required lists and keep them updated;
 - (ii) to compile information on the number of employees who attended duty/ number of absences, for submission to the Desk Officer/HRC;
 - (iii) to furnish such other information to the Desk Officer/HRC as may be required; and
 - (iv) to work in close collaboration with the HRC and the Desk Officer on matters relating to arrangements for release of staff.
- (e) **The officer responsible for Safety and Health in the Ministry/Department and Public Sector Organisation shall have the following main responsibilities:**
- (i) to make an assessment of the prevailing situation and to report on any safety and health issues identified;
 - (ii) to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the safety of all employees;
 - (iii) to ensure that all necessary safety rules, instructions and procedures are strictly adhered to; and
 - (iv) to work in close collaboration with the HRC on matters relating to safety and health of officers in connection with heavy rainfall.

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION

Upon issue of a heavy rainfall warning by the MMS, employees will have to report for duty, as usual, by taking necessary precautions for their own safety. However, they should **not** report for duty in the event a communiqué is issued by the authority concerned, before working hours, to the effect that public officers, other than those of the essential services, should not report for duty.

- 4.1.1** In case a communiqué is issued **during working hours** for the release of employees:
- (i) the MCSAR will issue a circular/email to Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Organisations and/or inform them through direct phone calls, to that effect;
 - (ii) Supervising Officers should immediately take necessary actions on the basis of established arrangements for the release of their employees; and
 - (iii) employees should await for instructions from Supervising Officer of their respective Ministry/Department/Public Sector Organisation before leaving office.
- 4.1.2** Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations should consider the **staggered release** of employees giving due consideration to the needs of individual employees and their release in stages according to the work requirements and established arrangements.

To ensure the safety of employees:

- (i) those with mobility problems such as pregnant or physically handicapped employees, should be allowed to leave on a priority basis;
- (ii) employees who live or work in affected areas should be allowed to leave earlier;
- (iii) given that certain transport services might cease to operate in adverse weather conditions, employees who rely on such transport facilities should also be given priority to leave; and
- (iv) for all other employees, arrangements should be made for their release in stages, according to their travelling distances.

Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Organisations should liaise with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to ensure availability of public transport.

- 4.1.3** To ensure that the staggered release of employees is effected in an orderly manner, the HRC should work out the release arrangements for the attention of all employees and have them reviewed on a regular basis. Release of employees in a phased manner will help to ensure their safety and ease traffic congestion.

5. ENFORCEMENT OF PROTOCOL

The Protocol is meant to be observed after the issue of Heavy Rainfall Warning by the MMS and after decision/instruction from the National Crisis Committee (NCC) upon recommendation from the NEOC before, during and after working hours.

6. HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING: WORK ARRANGEMENTS

The following arrangements should apply in case a heavy rainfall warning is in force:

S/N	Scenario/ Circumstances	Duty of Employer/ Employee	Remarks
(a)	Warning issued before working hours and no communiqué issued not to report for duty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All employees should report for duty as usual. Employees should inform their employers as soon as practicable if they have difficulties in reporting for duty. Supervisors of employees working outdoors should ensure that these employees do not proceed on site and stand by in a safe place. They should start work only when weather conditions so permit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees are advised to be suitably and adequately equipped with protective items such as umbrella, raincoat, etc. Employees who do not report for duty should cover their absence by one day leave. Employees should ensure their own safety.
(b) (i)	A warning is in force before working hours and a communiqué issued not to report for duty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees should not report for duty. Employees who are already on their way to work should revert back home/a safe place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees should ensure their own safety. Special leave to be granted on that day.
(ii)	Warning is waived before 11 00hrs.	All employees should report for work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees should apply for half day leave if they do not report for duty. Management should give due consideration of practical difficulties encountered by employees while reporting for duty. Cases reported to the employer should be dealt with on a case to case basis.
(iii)	Warning is waived after 11 00hrs.	Employees should not report for duty, unless exigencies of service so require.	Full day special leave to be granted to employees.

(c)	A warning is announced during working hours and communiqué to release employees not yet issued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees working indoors should continue their work. • Supervisors of employees working outdoors in exposed areas should promptly arrange for the employees to stop work and take shelter in a safe place. 	Employees should observe the necessary safety precautions and await for instructions, if any.
(d)	A warning is announced during working hours and a communiqué is issued to release employees before 11 00hrs.	Supervising Officers should arrange for the staggered release of employees in an orderly manner, as stated above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special leave to employees. • Employees should observe the necessary safety precautions and await for instructions, if any.
(e)	A warning is announced during working hours and a communiqué is issued to release employees as from 11 00hrs.	Supervising Officers should arrange for the staggered release of employees in an orderly manner, as stated above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of employees who are already on site of work. • Half day leave from those who did not turn up for duty/did not register their attendance in the event communiqué is issued by noon. • One day leave from those who did not turn up for duty/did not register their attendance in the event communiqué is issued after noon. • Employees should observe the necessary safety precautions and await for instructions, if any.
(f)	Warning still in force up to end of normal working hours and no communiqué issued for release of employees.	Normal working hours maintained.	Employees to take necessary precautions for their own safety.

- 6.1 Employees who have difficulties in reporting for duty on time should inform their employers immediately. Due consideration should be given to genuine difficulties encountered by employees who are unable to report for duty **after heavy rainfall warning is waived**.

7. LOCALISED HEAVY RAINFALL

- 7.1 In case of localised heavy rainfall, HRCs of Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations should:

- convene an urgent meeting to take stock of the situation;
- follow up closely with the NCC on developments;
- keep updated of weather situations especially in flood prone areas;
- give special consideration to employees working in flood prone areas regarding accessibility to and from workplace, especially where there are high concentration of offices, e.g., Port Louis and Ebene;
- take such decision in consultation with the NCC and the Supervising Officer concerned for the release of employees living in affected areas;
- liaise with the NTA regarding availability of public transport; and
- give appropriate instructions for the safety and release of employees.

7.2 Work Arrangements

In case of localised heavy rainfall, management should be flexible and take into account the prevailing situations such as traffic conditions and difficulties encountered by employees residing in affected regions. In such cases the following should apply:

(i) **Attending duty in the morning:**

A. **Employees may be allowed to attend duty up to 10 00hrs**

B. **Where employees could not attend duty by 10 00hrs**

The Supervising Officer may, subject to him/her being fully satisfied that arrival to work after 10 00hrs was beyond the employee's control and was due to the prevailing weather condition, decide that genuine cases of late arrivals should not be considered as lateness.

(ii) **Leaving Office**

Supervising Officers should exercise their discretion, on the basis of findings of the HRC, and in consultation with the NCC and the NTA to release employees living in affected areas to facilitate them in reaching home under safe conditions, based on their personal circumstances, the weather and road traffic conditions, etc.

8. GENERAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

In case of heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall employees should:

- **Stay informed**
 - as far as possible through radio and television, internet and social media, etc for information and updates on the weather condition
- **Avoid flood waters**
 - refrain from walking or driving through flooded areas
- **Move to higher levels**
 - get out of areas prone to flooding and move to higher levels for their own safety
- **Avoid basements**
 - keep away from basements which are prone to flooding/water accumulation during heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall.

9. SPECIAL PROVISIONS

- (i) where the condition outdoor is life threatening, management may, for the safety of employees request them to remain indoors and not to leave office even after office hours;
- (ii) in the event an employee decides to leave office in spite of management's request/warning, he/she should, before leaving office, sign an undertaking, as per Annex II, in the presence of the immediate supervisor to the effect that he/she assumes full responsibility of his/her decision;
- (iii) management should ensure that premises have been secured and that all electrical equipment and appliances are safely kept;
- (iv) employees should co-operate with their employers or other persons so far as may be necessary and follow the safety rules, instructions and work procedures as provided for in the prevailing Occupational Safety and Health legislation; and
- (v) employees working outdoors are strongly advised to keep abreast of weather conditions and use their own judgment and common sense, bearing in mind the overarching principle of safety of their person, before deciding on any course of action.

10. GENERAL PREPAREDNESS BY MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENTS AND PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH HEAVY RAINFALL/LOCALISED HEAVY RAINFALL

A. Before season of heavy rainfall

Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations should:

- (i) make appropriate arrangements for the sensitisation of employees on safety precautions;
- (ii) ensure that proper communication mechanisms are in place for the dissemination of information to all units and sub-offices of the Ministry/Department/Public Sector Organisation;
- (iii) ascertain that plans for release and evacuation of employees are readily available;
- (iv) ensure that lists of relevant contact persons/organisations are updated; and
- (v) ensure availability of an operational standby generator.

B. After heavy rainfall/localised heavy rainfall

Ministries/Departments and Public Sector Organisations should:

- (i) carry out an assessment of the situation;
- (ii) take appropriate remedial measures on shortcomings identified, if any; and
- (iii) forward Situation Reports to the NEOC.

MAIN CONTACT POINTS

1. MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Address: Sicom Building 2,
Cr. Chevreau & Rev. Jean Lebrun Streets
Port Louis

Telephone: 405 4100

Fax: 212 4160

Email: civser@govmu.org

2. NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT CENTRE/ NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS COMMAND

Address: Line Barracks, Port Louis, Mauritius

Telephone: 207 3900

Fax: 207 3927

Emergency No.: 5729 6033

Email: disaster@govmu.org

3. MAURITIUS METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES

Address: St Paul Rd B.4, Vacoas-Phoenix

Telephone: 686 1031 / 686 1032

Fax: 686 1033

Email: meteo@intnet.mu

4. NATIONAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

Address: M.S.I. Building, Royal Road, Les Cassis, Port Louis

Telephone: 202 2800

Hotline: 800 1555

Fax: 212 9386

Email: nta@intnet.mu

Heavy Rainfall/Localised Heavy Rainfall Undertaking to leave Office

I, Mr, Mrs, Miss, _____, holding the post of _____ at _____, am out of my own free will and accord, without the authority of and against the advice of my Supervising Officer/Responsible Officer leaving the office at _____ in spite of being made aware of the potential risks/dangers that may be encountered outdoor during the bad weather conditions.

I hereby release the office, its administration and personnel from any responsibility for all consequences, which may result by my leaving office under such circumstances.

Officer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Officer-In-Charge, HR Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Time of departure: _____

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