

An Introductory Guide:

High Wind and Bad Weather factors for Open Markets

Member enquiries are received from time to time about whether to cancel open markets when wind speeds are predicted to be high and very bad weather is expected. The advice below is a combination of advice based on the experiences and practices of several members.

General

Markets managers are often caught in a dilemma when open market stall traders want to continue trading to maintain their livings, but weather conditions indicate that there are health and safety risk issues to consider.

Markets are held in many different types of locations and **there is no one rule that can apply to every market.**

Markets range from dedicated marketplaces with fixed/permanent traditionally designed stalls to street markets with lightweight demountable stalls that include canvas or pvc/polyethylene roof canopies with back and side sheeting that is very vulnerable to high wind conditions.

Stalls that are permanently erected and firmly fixed to the ground are far less vulnerable to being blown over, of course – but goods on the stalls can still be blown off by high winds. Lightweight demountable stalls used on precincts need to have floor anchorages (singly, or at ends of rows, for instance) to cope with windy conditions. Naturally, gazebo/pop-up stalls are even more vulnerable as the encompassing nature of the stall covers leaves wind nowhere to go but to lift the stall up and away from the ground. Specialist stall manufacturers should offer recommendations on suitability of use in wind conditions and what extra equipment is needed to prevent “lifting off”.

Specific

It is **local conditions** that will dictate operational safety factors, as wind speed/direction and turbulence are particularly affected by layout and heights etc of surrounding buildings, so there **is not a “one rule for all”** - it’s far more complicated.

Information from different market managers around the country has been shared on NABMA’s Forum Basecamp and is readily available there for viewing.

Making yourself familiar with **the Met Office website** plus an understanding of the **Beaufort wind scale** chart is very useful (e.g. Force 5: Fresh Breeze is up to 21 knots/24 mph whereas Force 9: Strong Gale is up to 47knots/54 mph). A forecast of “Near Gale” (28-33 knots) may be enough for you to decide that a market should be cancelled, but in open locations a lesser wind may cause such a decision. **NABMA cannot advise what is correct in all locations. Local management has to consider the issues and make a decision.**

The use of an **anemometer** will tell you current wind conditions and how that is affecting structures in a market location.

Met Office weather warnings are in three categories: **Yellow** (awareness etc), **Amber** (be prepared for risk to life and property etc) and **Red** (risk to life, etc).

A risk assessment and operational policy are needed for each market location and type of stall in use - but **SAFETY** (for the public, traders and anyone in the vicinity) is of underlying importance, of course, followed by potential damage to property. **Management has a duty of care** and is, therefore, responsible as to whether a market should be cancelled.

A wrong decision to allow a market to continue in extreme weather conditions could **put at risk the council's own insurance policies**, so check with your insurer whether they have a wind speed criterion that will be helpful to your decision-making.

Individual **traders' third-party insurance cover** could also be compromised if they continue trading when it is common sense not to do so or when markets management instructs not to do so. In very high winds there is every possibility of injury to people and of damage to property caused by wind-blown market equipment.

Clearly, pop ups/gazebos are far more vulnerable to "taking off" than "normal stalls", be they fixed or demountable. Anchor points in the floor, jigsaw weights, sandbags etc are all issues for consideration, as is the question of removal of tilts and side/back sheets to enable traders to continue in dry but windy weather.

Allowing **vans** to stay on the market place as buffers and something to tie stall equipment to is for a local decision - and the type of goods and foods on sale can also determine matters (greengrocery weighs stalls down so generally can remain more than "easily blown off" clothing, for instance).

Your operational policy should include the timing of an advance cancellation notice to your traders. If wind conditions change and become far worse during the market day so that there is danger of injury or damage to property, then you have a duty to cancel the market and a responsibility to ensure that traders and stall equipment are removed as a matter of urgency.

Your stall licence/rules and regulations should include how you are to deal with stall/retaining fee charges when a market is cancelled.

The market manager can cancel a market on the grounds of public interest and safety – but have systems and procedures in place, including the training of staff, to show that your decision is sound and in adherence to your duty of care.

This advice document has been produced with the involvement of several market managers and NABMA thanks them for their support. Particular thanks go to John Walker (Forum Manager) and to Mark Hryniw of Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, whose local document "Management of Markets in Severe Weather" (see below) is an excellent example from which to learn and indicates how you can develop an operational policy for your own local conditions.

Management of Markets in Severe Weather

Aim

This policy aims to protect public safety, the safety of staff and the safety of traders in the event of severe weather affecting any open-air market operated by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC). (See Appendix 1 for definitions of severe weather.)

Implementation

The Market Manager, or in his absence, the Markets Assistant shall implement this policy. Any escalation of the policy should be put to the Town Centre Manager.

Arrangements

The following arrangements shall be implemented:

1) Weather Forecast Information.

The Markets Manager shall obtain advance warning of severe weather from the following sources:

- i. HBBC Intranet
- ii. The Met Office website:
www.met-office.gov.uk/weather/europe/uk/midlands.html (5-day local forecast)

The Met Office:

☎ 0870 9000100 (24 hours)

A severe weather warning in itself is not a reason to cancel the market. The Markets Manager shall use their own judgement of the prevailing weather to decide if the market, or parts of the market, can be erected safely. The Markets Manager should however take the forecast into account:

- a) To determine the feasibility of waiting for severe weather to abate before authorising stalls to be erected. (A decision to cancel the market in advance of stalls being set up must be taken by 6.00 a.m. at the latest.).
- b) To ensure sufficient Markets staff are available to make safe all market boards safe.
- c) To ensure that the Depot is on call to dismantle stalls quickly should the weather deteriorate during the day. If severe weather is predicted and this service cannot be guaranteed, the Markets Manager should consider cancelling the market.

The Market Manager should contact the Town Centre Manager so they may be informed of the decision in the early hours of the morning if, in his estimation, the weather conditions prevent stalls being erected safely.

2. Manpower.

Six persons is the minimum number of trained staff required to erect and dismantle the market in severe weather. These staff shall form two teams of three, working at separate locations in the market, under the direction of the Supervisor.

If markets are held when a severe weather warning is in force, the Market Manager and the Market Assistant shall remain on site. Other staff can be called in as required.

2) Emergency contact telephone numbers

Emergency contact numbers are appended to this policy (Appendix 3).

3) Ensuring Safety during Severe Weather.

The market stalls have been designed to withstand very high winds, once the board and covers are removed. The stalls are to be left standing until the crews can load them directly onto the skids.

If the boards on empty market stalls start to lift, the following procedure is to be taken:

Markets Manager and Markets Assistant are to move all boards to their relevant zone, where they will be ratchet strapped together for safety.

The Markets Manager can call a partial cancellation to the market, whereby all non-perishable goods will be told they cannot trade, but perishable goods will be able to trade, as long as the stall is weighted down with their goods and no sheet is used.

4) Cancellation of markets

The following actions must be taken to minimise disruption to traders:

- A decision to cancel the market without erecting any stalls on a Friday must be taken by 6.00 a.m. at the latest. The Town Centre Manager is contactable at home and will be telephoned by the Markets Manager to be informed of the decision.
- The Market Manager must have his mobile phone turned on, and in addition leave an answer message on his phone informing of the decision to cancel the market by 4.00 am. **Regular market traders are advised to check this message before they set out – 07966201305**
- Additional publicity, using media such as:
Fosse 107 (☎01455 700 107, email sales@fosse107.co.uk)
BBC Radio Leicester (☎0116 251 6688, e-mail radioleicester@bbc.co.uk)
HBBC website www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk

These shall, wherever practicable, be used to supplement the Manager point of contact.

- If, for reasons of safety, the weather conditions prevent a trader from using a stall the Market Manager has discretion to permit traders to trade from their vehicles. The Markets Manager will advise the contact team at HBBC and the Town Centre Manager when this occurs.
- The Town Centre Manager has discretion to waive or reduce fees and charges where weather conditions have resulted in part or all of the market being cancelled.
- A Red weather warning from the Met Office will mean that the Market is cancelled and no trader can trade at all.

6) Procedure for dismantling the markets in severe winds:

- i. Call the emergency telephone Depot number for them to organise the necessary manpower to dismantle the market.
- ii. Telephone the Police to advise them of the difficulties and to request assistance as appropriate.
- iii. Use barrier tape to define the working areas for the teams of stall dismantlers. N.B. each team shall comprise two lifters and a spotter.
- iv. Bring the trailers to the work area to minimise lifting and carrying.
- v. Stalls should be put straight onto the trailers if the following conditions are satisfied:
 - ✓ Immediate vicinity is clear of public i.e. area surrounding stall to be moved.
 - ✓ Spotter confirms that no public are in the vicinity,
 - ✓ Trailer is moved as close as possible to the stall and is positioned to provide shelter while the stall is being manoeuvred,
 - ✓ The two people lifting the stall are confident that they can do so safely.
 - ✓ The Supervisor should verify that these conditions have been satisfied.

**THIS POLICY SHALL BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL REGULAR
MARKET TRADERS**

Appendix 1 Definition of Severe Weather

The following terms are used by the Meteorological Office to define severe weather conditions:

Severe Gales	Gusts of 70 m.p.h. or more.
Severe Gales/storms	Gusts of 80 m.p.h. or more.
Heavy Snow	Snow falling at a rate of approx. 2 cm/hour or more expected for at least two hours.
Blizzards/drifting snow	Moderate or heavy snow accompanied by winds of 30 m.p.h. or more with visibility reduced to 200 m or less, or drifting snow giving rise to similar conditions.
Very heavy snowfall, blizzards or drifting snow	Expected to give depths of 15 cm or more potentially resulting in widespread dislocation of communications. Blizzards are severe when visibility is reduced to near zero.
Heavy rain	Expected to persist for at least two hours and to give at least 15 mm within a three-hour period, or a period of rainfall of sufficient intensity to cause flooding on already saturated ground (includes snow-melt), i.e. around 25 mm/day.
Dense Fog	Visibility generally less than 50 m.
Freezing rain/widespread icy roads	Generally, occurs when rain freezes on contact with road surfaces.

This policy shall apply whenever severe weather warnings issued by the Met Office are in force.

However, it is recognised that severe disruption to the market can be caused by weather that falls short of these extreme conditions.

This policy shall therefore also apply whenever, in the opinion of the Market Manager, public safety may be put at risk due to adverse weather conditions affecting the market.

A weather diary should be kept to build up an informed picture of the conditions that can seriously disrupt the market: a decision to cancel or proceed can thus be justified on the basis of historical evidence.

Weather Warnings are defined by colour warnings and these warnings are defined below:

Yellow:

Be aware. Severe weather is possible over the next few days and could affect you. Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day to day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and Yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans in the next few days.

Amber:

Be prepared. There is an increased likelihood of bad weather affecting you, which could potentially disrupt your plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means you need

to be prepared to change your plans and protect you, your family and community from the impacts of the severe weather based on the forecast from the Met Office

Red:

Take action. Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather. Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.


Appendix 2

Decision Making Framework – for use by the Markets Manager

	Weather conditions		
Manpower available?	Good but deteriorating later in the day	Bad but improving later in the day	Bad and worsening
YES	Hold the market if the time available to trade is acceptable but warn staff that they could be called in to make the stalls safe or dismantle if necessary.	If possible, set out the stall framework but leave stall boards off until traders arrive with their stock to weigh the stalls down.	Consider cancelling the market and making the site safe. Only dismantle the stalls if necessary.
<p>Both the Markets Manager and Market Assistant should remain on site until action to remedy the severe weather has taken place and the market traders have left or the Severe Weather Warning is downgraded.</p>			
NO	Cancel the market	Wait until 4.00 a.m. to make a decision	Cancel the market

Appendix 3
Emergency Contact Numbers:

Name	
Market Manager	07966201305
Market Assistant	07884127399
Town Centre Manager	07966201265
Depot Emergency No	07966 202831

Name	
Fosse 107	01455 700 107
Police	0116 222222
BBC Radio Leics	0116 251 6688
HBBC Control Centre	01455 251137