



**AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION VICTORIAN BRANCH INC.**

**ADMINISTRATIVE BRANCH POLICY STATEMENT 4.07**

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OHS)**

**EXTREME WEATHER AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ADAVB recognises that hazardous environmental conditions including inclement weather and other emergencies can affect the Branch's ability to open for business and the ability to get to and from work. The safety of ADAVB personnel is paramount in any emergency. This policy covers the most likely potential emergency situations.

## 2. PURPOSE

This policy has been developed to provide guidance on the expected actions and responsibilities of ADAVB personnel in the event of extreme weather or emergency situations.

## 3. SCOPE

The extreme weather and emergency response policy applies to ADAVB employees, contractors, Council and Committee members, and office visitors.

## 4. BRANCH OPERATIONS

In some emergency situations, the Branch may be able to continue operating with reduced staffing and limited functions. Many functions can continue to operate remotely in cases where the Branch office is closed.

The Branch office may close as a result of, but not limited to, the following emergency situations:

- Any event that may reasonably be expected to severely disrupt transportation, or has the potential to endanger the health and safety of personnel during travel to or from work and/or whilst at work
- The Branch does not have an electricity supply
- Ventilation is unavailable inside the Branch offices and is unlikely to be restored on the same day
- The building manager, or Emergency Warning Intercommunication System (EWIS) instruct that the building be evacuated, and such evacuation is neither a drill, nor likely to be for less than three hours
- There is a communicable disease outbreak in the community
- The climate of the working environment falls outside of the acceptable range: Worksafe suggests a comfortable work environment is offered when the temperature is 20 - 26°C and relative humidity is 30 - 60%<sup>1, 2</sup>. Extreme temperature or humidity well outside this range would potentially trigger Branch closure.

The ADAVB CEO will be responsible for deciding if environmental conditions are unsuitable for personnel to travel to or from work or remain in the office. In the CEO's absence the Operations Manager will be responsible for making this decision. Access to the office may be restricted to those with security passes in some circumstances.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITY FOR NOTIFICATION

5.1 In an emergency, management will make every effort to notify ADAVB personnel of changes to Branch operations, including Branch closure, by email, phone, text

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<sup>1</sup> The [Victorian OHS Act 2004](#) requires that "An employer must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain for employees of the employer a working environment that is safe and without risks to health."

<sup>2</sup> WorkSafe Victoria provides guidance that specifies minimum environmental conditions for the workplace, see: [Guidance note: Working in Heat](#) (July 2012), and: [Compliance Code. Workplace amenities and work environment, Ed. 1, \(Sept. 2008\)](#).

message or on the ADAVB website. Staff contact details must be kept up to date for these reasons.

- 5.2 When ADAVB management is unable to notify personnel of changes to operations or closure, personnel are asked to use common sense and make their best assessment of the safety and practicality of the situation and endeavour to advise management accordingly.
- 5.3 ADAVB personnel are expected to advise management that they have received notification of the changes to operations or closure and indicate their working-from-home preferences, where applicable.

## **6. WORKING FROM HOME**

- 6.1 Staff may be offered the opportunity to work from home in situations where the Branch office is closed, or conditions pose a risk to health and safety during travel to work or whilst at work.
- 6.2 If ADAVB personnel are working from home, every effort should be made to comply with Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

## **7. WHEN AN EMERGENCY OCCURS, SUCH AS THOSE LISTED IN SECTION 4., AND PERSONNEL ARE ALREADY AT WORK**

- 7.1 ADAVB Management should advise personnel that the Branch is closing and that they should return home as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.
- 7.2 ADAVB personnel are expected, after advising management that they are departing the Branch, to return home as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.
- 7.3 In the event that the Branch closes, but it is not safe or practical to leave, staff may remain in the office until leaving becomes possible. Staff may continue working, provided that the environment is safe and without risks to health.

## **8. EMPLOYEE SALARY ARRANGEMENTS AND BENEFITS ENTITLEMENTS DURING THE TIME WHEN THE BRANCH IS CLOSED**

- 8.1 Under Section 524(1) of the Fair Work Act 2009<sup>3</sup>: An employer may 'stand-down' employees during a period in which employees cannot usefully be employed because of one of the following circumstances:
  - industrial action (other than industrial action organised or engaged in by the employer)
  - a breakdown of machinery, equipment or systems that prevent employees from being able to perform any aspect of their role, if the employer cannot reasonably be held responsible for the breakdown
  - a stoppage of work for any cause for which the employer cannot reasonably be held responsible (e.g. a natural disaster).
- 8.2 If employees are stood-down during a period under these conditions, the employer is not required to make payments to the employee for that period<sup>4</sup>, and the employee is not expected to work during that time<sup>5</sup> (see also 8.6 and 8.7 below).

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<sup>3</sup> [Fair work Act 2009](#)

<sup>4</sup> Section 524(1) of the Fair Work Act 2009 only applies to employees whose employment contract does not stipulate other stand-down arrangements

<sup>5</sup> Employees who have been stood down without pay for an extended period are advised to contact Centrelink on 13 28 50 to discuss the options available based on the employee's individual circumstances, including income support payment options and other assistance

- 8.3 Any employee who is stood-down will be advised of the expected stand-down period and arrangements, in writing by the employer.
- 8.4 Employees may request to take any paid leave owing and, if approved by their Manager/ Chief Executive Officer, they will continue to receive their regular salary.
- 8.5 Any employee who is on paid or unpaid leave cannot be stood-down.
- 8.6 Alternatively, employees may request to work from home, where possible, and, if approved by their Manager/ Chief Executive Officer, they will continue to receive their regular salary.
- 8.7 If the Branch office must close, but the circumstances do not qualify as a 'stand-down', employees will continue to receive their regular salary and are expected to continue to work from home, where practicable.
- 8.8 During a Branch closure or stand-down (where staff are not working from home), employees will continue to receive superannuation and leave entitlements. Any benefits that are associated with physically attending work will not be offered during a Branch closure. No time off in lieu or payments for overtime will be applicable.

**9. PERIOD OF BRANCH CLOSURE**

- 9.1 The Branch/ office will be closed for the briefest period of time possible. The Branch will re-open when conditions listed in 4. no-longer apply.
- 9.2 ADAVB Management will advise staff of the Branch/ office re-opening by email, phone call or text message, and on the ADAVB website.
- 9.3 All personnel are expected to respond to Management that they have received the Branch/ office re-opening message.
- 9.4 When the Branch/ office closure ends, all personnel are expected to report to work on their regular schedule, provided that they can travel to work safely.

**10. WHEN THE BRANCH IS OPEN AND ADAVB PERSONNEL CANNOT GET TO WORK OR ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND**

- 10.1 The ADAVB recognises that, after an emergency has occurred, some personnel may need additional time off to repair extensive home damage, for mass transit to be available for transportation to work, and a variety of other emergency situations. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and decisions will also be affected by the individual's job requirements.

<b>Branch Policy Statement Number</b>	<b>4.07 (Admin)</b>
<b>Adopted by Council</b>	<b>20 July 2015</b>
<b>Reviewed/ amended by CEO</b>	<b>14 April 2020</b>
<b>Relevant Rules</b>	
<b>Relevant By-Laws</b>	
<b>See also</b>	<b>BPS 4.06 Occupational Health and Safety</b>

