

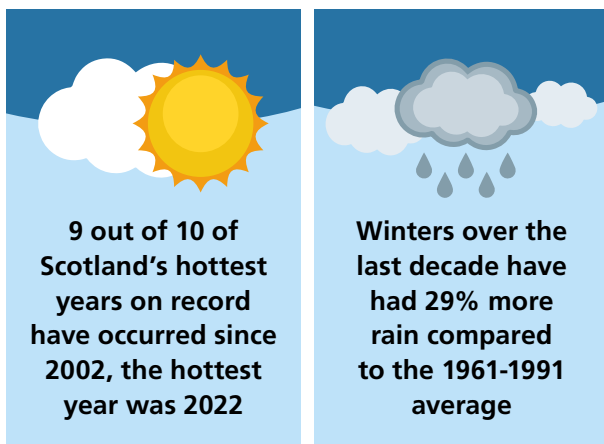
# Prepare Your Business for Extreme Weather

**Businesses across all sectors are being impacted by extreme weather. By preparing your business you can manage the risks and identify opportunities for new products and services.**

## Scotland's weather is changing

In 2023 Storm Babet flooded premises, closed roads, damaged electrical equipment and crops. The heatwave of July 2022 saw businesses struggle to keep refrigerated goods cool and caused temporary closures due to unsafe working temperatures for workers.

These extreme weather events are not a one-off. They are part of the long-term shift in global weather patterns we refer to as climate change.



## Benefits of preparing your business

- Ensures business continuity
- Future proofs products and services
- Minimises damage and repair costs
- Identifies new income streams and areas for business growth or competitive advantage

## Funding and costs

Find funding via [Find Business Support](#). Many adaptation actions can be funded under mitigation, net zero or green grants. This resource does not include costs as they depend on local risks, local prices and market conditions.

## Climate impacts for businesses

-  **People** – Workers are unable to get to work and customers unable to access premises due to flooded roads and cancelled trains.
-  **Products and services** – Businesses cannot source their usual supplies due to disruption of supply chains.
-  **Premises** – Heavy rain causes a roof to leak, damaging equipment and stock. Overheating results in open-air fridges not keeping food cool enough and the loss of goods and trade.
-  **Processes** – Business operations are halted due to loss of electricity, water or telecoms after a storm.
-  **Place** – Local flooding affects workers, customers, and operations. Goods unable to leave the warehouse.

## How businesses can take action

There are two main ways to respond to climate change; **mitigation** to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and **adaptation** to prepare and respond to the impacts of climate change.

**Use the checklists in this resource** to identify how your business may be impacted by extreme weather and prioritise the adaptation actions you can take to build resilience.



# People

Plan ahead to protect your workers & customers during extreme weather.	To do	Doing	Done
<p><b>1. Create a contingency plan for occasions when extreme weather means workers cannot travel to work as normal. Ask yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What roles are needed on site? Consider whether those with the shortest commute or least likely to be affected by transport disruption have the critical knowledge to operate the business.</li> <li>• Who can work from home? When there is a Met Office weather warning, prepare staff who are able to work from home. For example, taking laptops home the night before.</li> <li>• If workers cannot travel in the morning, who do they contact? Does this differ depending on their role?</li> <li>• Workers with families or caring commitments may be unable to travel due to closure of schools and care services. How can those colleagues be supported?</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2. Introduce health and safety protocols to protect workers during extreme weather, especially those working outside. Including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand your legal obligations and liabilities for working conditions. For example, Health and Safety Executive guidance on <a href="#">temperature in the workplace</a>.</li> <li>• Set a maximum and minimum temperature for safe working. Where possible, enable workers to work in cooler hours of the day and wear cooler clothing during heatwaves. Provide heating and appropriate PPE during cold snaps.</li> <li>• Provide cold water, refrigerated food storage and other supplies such as sun protection and shaded respite areas to deal with extreme heat.</li> <li>• Establish safety procedures for pregnant workers or customers, or those with medical conditions likely to be made worse by extreme temperatures (hot or cold), such as high or low blood pressure, asthma, heart disease, epilepsy or diabetes. See the HSE guidance on <a href="#">dehydration</a>, <a href="#">heat stress</a> and <a href="#">cold stress</a>.</li> <li>• Consider if there are any weather-related thresholds that mean activities need to be suspended, such as wind speeds when working at height.</li> <li>• Ensure workers have Health and Safety Training, including First Aid.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>3. Involve workers in identifying and reporting climate risks, as frontline staff often spot risks before they are visible to management. For example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the impacts and risks of extreme weather during worker inductions and training.</li> <li>• Ask workers to report potential hazards and keep a register of these. This could include areas prone to flooding, instances when it is too hot or cold to work safely, or damaged parts of a building that could fall in a storm.</li> <li>• Consider hazards such as flooding and wind damage during site risk assessments.</li> <li>• Near miss events can be useful warnings and lessons learned must be applied to work practices. Encourage a no-blame culture for reporting near misses. Follow the guidance of the <a href="#">Fair Work Charter for Severe Weather</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Learn more about identifying and responding to climate hazards in the workplace with the <a href="#">Adaptation Scotland handbook</a>.</p>			



# Premises

Improve the resilience of the building(s) your business operates from, whether owned or leased.	To do	Doing	Done
<p><b>1. Check the flood risk of your premises:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit the <a href="#">SEPA Flood Risk map</a> and enter your postcode.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2. If your premises is in a flood risk area, take simple actions to protect your business from flooding. Including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign up for the <a href="#">SEPA live flood alerts and flood warnings</a>.</li> <li>Permanently raise electrical items, valuables and stock up off the floor, ideally 60-90cm or more. Do not store electrical items, perishable materials, important documents or IT equipment in basements.</li> <li>Investigate installing <a href="#">property flood resilience measures</a> such as flood barriers, airbrick covers, non-return plumbing valves, and sandbags.</li> <li>Create a <a href="#">Business Flood Plan</a>, so that all workers know how to respond to flood warnings.</li> <li>Make contingency plans to operate from temporary premises or online, if feasible.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>3. Conduct a site walk around to identify potential climate risks and hazards, using the template on <a href="#">pages 16-18 of the Climate Hazards in the Workplace Workbook</a>. Ask yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the site previously experienced any incidents resulting in injuries, disruption, or damage because of extreme weather, flooding or fire?</li> <li>What worked well and what didn't during past storms, floods and heatwaves?</li> <li>Create a plan to address any known issues.</li> <li>Create an emergency evacuation plan, including consideration of any exit routes or disabled access that may be blocked in extreme weather.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>4. Identify ways to make your premises more resilient to extreme weather. Including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve drainage and ensure there are no blockages, to cope with heavy rainfall.</li> <li>Increase shading and green spaces, to help with cooling during extreme heat.</li> <li><a href="#">Improve energy efficiency</a>, to improve thermal comfort and reduce energy demand.</li> <li>Consider converting external surfaces such as tarmac to <a href="#">permeable surfaces</a>, to reduce surface water flooding</li> <li>Review a <a href="#">range of possible responses to adapt buildings to extreme weather</a> and select the actions most relevant to your premises</li> <li>Moving into a new premises or during refurbishment is a good time to do this. If you do not own your premises, speak with your landlord and other tenants about what measures could be taken to protect the property and the people using it.</li> </ul>			

Improve the resilience of the building(s) your business operates from, whether owned or leased.	To do	Doing	Done
<p><b>5. Poorly maintained buildings are less able to withstand extreme weather and are more likely to suffer structural damage and harm your business. Ensure you or your landlord schedule regular building maintenance every 3 months. Including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking drains, gutters and downpipes are not blocked</li> <li>• Checking for any loose external cladding or roofing</li> <li>• Checking for any loose masonry at risk of falling</li> </ul>			
<p><b>6. Before signing a lease or purchasing a new premises, consider how vulnerable the site is. Ask yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site in or near a <a href="#">flood risk area</a>?</li> <li>• Is the site in (or have) a basement? Basements are more exposed to flood risk.</li> <li>• Does it have a flat roof? These can leak during heavy rain.</li> <li>• Does the site have few windows that open, metal roof or walls, no or limited ventilation? These features make it more likely to overheat.</li> <li>• Is it a top floor premises or attic conversion? These spaces are vulnerable to overheating, extreme cold and wind damage.</li> <li>• Is it a historic building with ornate features? These buildings can be vulnerable to freeze-thaw erosion and wind damage which can lead to falling masonry.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>7. Check your insurance covers your business for a range of eventualities connected to weather-related disruptions. Including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme weather events</li> <li>• Business continuity insurance</li> <li>• Cover for the full value of your business as you grow</li> <li>• Relevant excess and T&amp;Cs</li> <li>• Review your insurance cover at least annually</li> </ul> <p><b>Always speak to a qualified insurance broker to identify the right insurance for your business. For more information on insurance, please visit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Business Flood Insurance</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Flood Insurance Directory</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Scottish Flood Forum</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Advice for businesses affected by flooding</a></li> </ul>			
<p><b>8. Create an emergency 'grab bag' or digital back up of key documents, plans and contact details in case you have to evacuate the premises.</b></p>			



# Products and services

<b>Improve the resilience of your product or service to extreme weather and identify opportunities for innovation.</b>	To do	Doing	Done
<p><b>1. Consider how a warmer, wetter climate and more extreme weather may impact your product or service. Ask yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does it need to be kept at a certain temperature? How will you ensure the temperature is maintained on extremely hot days or during cold spells?</li> <li>• Is your product or service weather dependant? How might more unpredictable and extreme weather impact sales and operations?</li> <li>• Does it rely on digital connectivity? How will you avoid disruption the event of outages to telecoms or power?</li> <li>• Does it involve workers or customer travel? What alternative solutions can you provide when transport is disrupted? Such as virtual appointments.</li> <li>• Will extreme weather change customer demand? Such as reduced footfall during flooding or increased demand in cooler parts of the day during heatwaves. How can you adjust your product or service model to accommodate this?</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2. Identify opportunities to develop products or services that are resilient and respond to new markets created by extreme weather, both in Scotland and globally. Ask yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What new markets will develop in a warmer and wetter Scotland, with more frequent extreme weather? For example, a warmer climate may increase the variety of crops grown in Scotland and increase demand for tourism and outdoor recreation.</li> <li>• What opportunities are there to develop new products and services that help your customers respond to extreme weather? Such as new opportunities for building maintenance services and expertise in water management and drainage.</li> <li>• Have you noticed any new customer needs emerging during recent extreme weather? How can you develop new offerings to meet these needs? For example, helping customers repair damage to buildings or seek shade during their visit to your premises.</li> <li>• Which parts of your product or service are most vulnerable to extreme weather? How can you improve this and create a more resilient product or service? For example, exploring alternative materials for your product so that you can adapt to unpredictable material availability.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>3. Extreme weather will impact your suppliers too. Prepare your business for supply chain disruption by diversifying your network of suppliers, in line with the UK Government’s <a href="#">Supply Chain Resilience Framework</a>. Including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up accounts with alternative suppliers to ensure you can still access critical goods or materials if your usual supplier is disrupted.</li> <li>• Consider keeping small stockpiles of critical goods or materials.</li> <li>• Explore sourcing alternative goods or materials</li> <li>• Ensure supplier and customer contracts have a ‘force majeure’ clause, to provide contractual flexibility in circumstances beyond your control</li> <li>• If you operate internationally, review the International Trade Centre’s ‘<a href="#">Small business in value chains</a>’ publication</li> </ul>			



# Processes

Preparing for extreme weather and climate change works best when the actions identified are embedded within existing business processes and policies. Review these actions as part of business continuity plans every 3-6 months.

You can find guidance and resources to support the risk assessments in this section on the Adaptation Scotland website. For example, the [Climate Hazards and Resilience in the Workplace Workbook](#) or the [Climate Change Risk Assessment guidance for the build environment](#).

Future proof your business processes and minimise disruption from extreme weather events.	To do	Doing	Done
<p><b>1. Identify which business processes are most important and how to protect them from extreme weather. Ask yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which processes are essential to your business?</li> <li>• Which processes are essential for the health and safety of workers and customers?</li> <li>• Which processes are most vulnerable to extreme weather? Such as heatwaves, droughts, storms, heavy rain, flooding, extremely high or low temperatures.</li> <li>• Have any of these processes already been disrupted by extreme weather, or could be disrupted in the future? Such as flooding meaning deliveries cannot reach customers, extremely high temperatures impacting workers wellbeing and reducing productivity.</li> <li>• How can you increase the resilience of these processes or put back-up processes in place? For example, keeping small stockpiles of key products or preparing workers to work remotely.</li> <li>• Develop and test alternative processes.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2. Identify which equipment and machinery could be impacted by extreme weather and plan to protect it. Ask yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What equipment or machinery is essential to your business?</li> <li>• What equipment or machinery is essential to the health and safety of workers and customers?</li> <li>• In an emergency, how can you move the most important items and where to?</li> <li>• Which equipment or materials are likely to be damaged or malfunction in extreme heat and high humidity? Can you improve ventilation and shading near the equipment, or move it to where you store heat sensitive stock?</li> <li>• Which equipment or materials could be damaged by flooding or heavy rain? Can you raise critical equipment and stock up off the floor and out of basements?</li> <li>• When investing in new equipment, will it be able to operate in warmer and more humid conditions?</li> </ul>			

Future proof your business processes and minimise disruption from extreme weather events.	To do	Doing	Done
<p><b>3. Embed climate resilience in day-to-day management processes and decision-making criteria. For example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include extreme weather in risk assessments and emergency plans.</li> <li>• Encourage workers to report issues at team meetings, including near-miss events so that you can act before an incident arises.</li> <li>• Ensure client and supplier contracts include flexibility for weather related disruption.</li> <li>• If you rely on essential materials from just one supplier, make sure to keep enough stock to manage supply chain disruptions that last days or weeks</li> <li>• Regularly update risk assessments to reflect changes in the workplace and the <a href="#">latest climate change projections</a>.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>4. Back-up information about key processes, so you can operate with reduced workers or remotely if needed. For example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document the key steps involved in important processes and procedures.</li> <li>• Create a list of contact details for workers, customers, suppliers and account details such as banking or insurance.</li> <li>• Back-up computers and important documents in a safe and separate location, in case your computers are damaged by flooding, storms or power surges.</li> <li>• Telecoms and IT can fail if there is a loss of power, back-up systems (such as walkie-talkies or satellite phones) can be useful, especially if workers are working in remote locations.</li> </ul>			



# Place

Work with others to improve the resilience of the area surrounding your premises. Some actions work best when businesses collaborate on shared risks and actions, such as making surfaces more permeable to reduce the risk of surface water flooding or planting more trees for shading.

To do    Doing    Done

1. Connect with neighbouring businesses and households, local Business Improvement Districts and local community resilience groups to collaborate on shared interests and identify issues connected to the impacts of extreme weather and climate change.

2. If you are based at a business park or a location where your premises are shared with other businesses, share your experiences of how your premises cope with extreme weather and near miss events to create a wider no-blame culture of reporting and learning.

3. Check if there is a regional adaptation partnership in your area via the [Adaptation Scotland website](#). They may have resources and opportunities to collaborate with other organisations in your area.

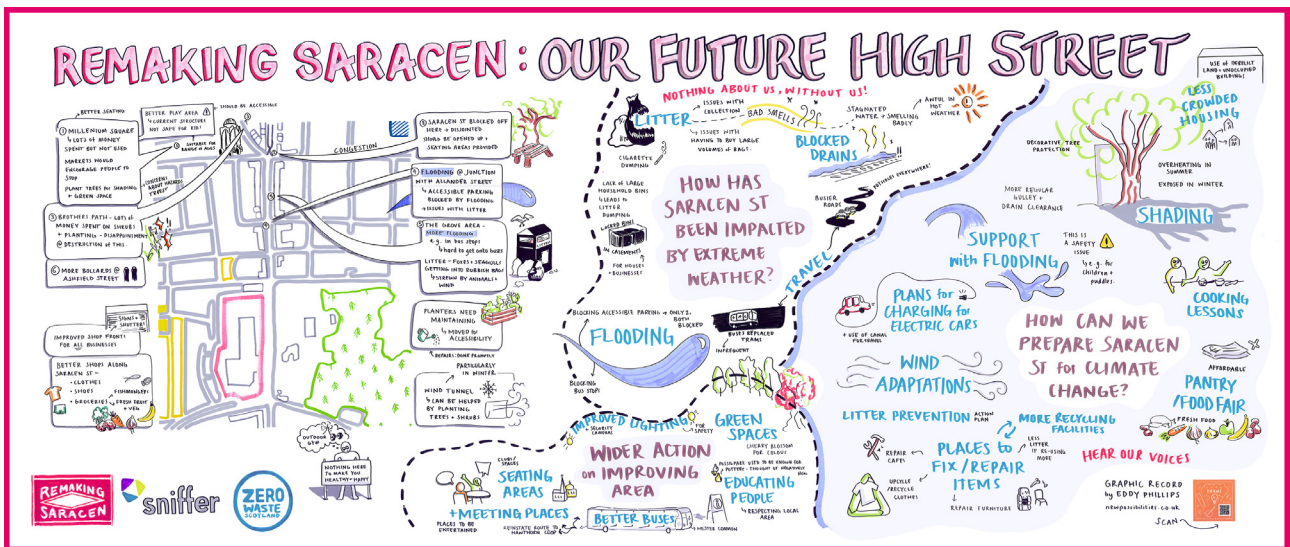


Illustration from Possilpark Business Improvement District climate resilience event, supported by Glasgow City Council



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Adaptation Scotland provides advice and support to help organisations, businesses and communities in Scotland prepare for, and build resilience to, the impacts of climate change.

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