



Co-op Emergency Leave Policy

Manager FAQ's

Here at the Co-op we know that sometimes emergencies happen and we're supportive of colleagues who face emergencies outside of work.

These FAQ's set out some of the key things you need to know about emergency leave and a few further things to think about.

Q. Under what circumstances is a colleague able to take emergency leave?

A. Here at the Co-op, we don't have any restrictions around the relationships or types of situations in which emergency leave might be taken. If any of your team members find themselves faced with an emergency situation, they should contact you as soon as they can to discuss their circumstances.

As their manager, when they contact you, you should ask them about the reason for their need to take emergency leave, how much time they think they need off work to deal with the emergency and seek to understand their individual circumstances so you can properly support them.

You should always try to give colleagues the time off that they need to deal with an emergency situation, although understandably you'll need to balance this against the needs of the business. It will be up to you to decide on a case-by-case basis looking at individual circumstances how much time off would be appropriate and whether it is paid or unpaid.

We don't have a definitive list of situations that emergency leave applies to, however here are a few examples:

- Sudden illness, injury or assault of a dependant
- Unexpected short-term breakdown of childcare or other care arrangements for a dependant
- Child involved in a serious incident at school
- Assisting a dependant who is giving birth
- Dealing with a house burglary
- Dealing with a car theft or breakdown
- Dealing with a house flood or fire

Planned events such as school holidays, domestic repairs, building work or home deliveries wouldn't be classed as an emergency.

Q. Are there any legal considerations I need to think about?

A. Yes. By law, anyone classed as an employee has the right to take time off work to help someone who depends on them in an unexpected event. The law does not say how much time can be taken off, or how many occasions. It simply says that they are entitled to a 'reasonable' amount of time off. A colleague's dependants can include:

- their spouse, partner or civil partner
- their child
- their parent
- a person who lives in their household (not tenants, lodgers or employees)
- a person who would rely on them for help in the event of an accident, illness or injury such as an elderly neighbour
- a person who relies on them to make care arrangements

What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances.

Q. How many days emergency leave should I allow for a colleague?

A. As a manager you should discuss colleagues' personal situations with them and authorise an appropriate amount of leave to help them deal with the emergency. Usually this would be very short term and for just one or two days to help them deal with the immediate emergency, for example to secure damaged property or arrange alternative childcare.

However sometimes more than a day or two might be reasonable, for example if childcare arrangements have fallen through and the colleague can't find anyone else to look after their child. Emergency leave should not be allowed to continue for long periods of time and would not be appropriate for when a colleague themselves feels unwell themselves and unable to come into work; this should be dealt with as sickness absence.

For colleagues who need longer term arrangements, for example to arrange ongoing care for a relative or ongoing care for an ill child, other Co-op policies may be more appropriate. Talk to your colleague about other options if they need more time, such as taking their holidays, arranging [parental leave](#), [flexible working](#) or a [career break](#). If someone close to them has died or is terminally ill, our [compassionate leave policy](#) may be more appropriate.

There may be occasions where emergency leave is not appropriate, for example if the colleague had advance warning of the situation and just hadn't sorted anything out. If you are unsure about whether emergency leave is the right solution for your colleague contact ER Sevices for advice.

Q. Do I need to have a return-to-work conversation with my colleague when they come back to work?

A. Return to work conversations are not mandatory for all colleagues returning from emergency leave. However, as a manager you may want to have a discussion with your colleague when they return to see how they are and make sure that they have all the support they need once they are back in work. The Co-op recognises that distressing situations can have a significant impact on colleagues' work and personal lives and that our colleagues may need extra support. To find out more about the wellbeing support on offer for colleagues you can visit the [Wellbeing Hub](#)

There may also be times where you need to talk to colleagues about their circumstances to give them the right support if they are using emergency leave frequently or need more time off. If following a return-to-work conversation, you think your colleagues' use of emergency leave is impacting their wellbeing or is regularly preventing them from attending work please contact ER Services for advice.

There is a return-to-work template at the end of this document to help guide the conversation should you wish to use it.

Q. Can I refuse a request for emergency leave?

A. You must always authorise a reasonable amount of time off for a colleague dealing with a genuine emergency. It is important that you confirm to the colleague the amount of time off that you are authorising. Sometimes it might be appropriate to authorise a day or two initially, and then require the colleague to update you as to whether they have sorted things out. If they have tried but not managed to, it may be reasonable to authorise some further time off. However, there may be circumstances when time off is unreasonable and so you can refuse to authorise it. If you are considering refusing to authorise an emergency leave request, you must contact ERS for advice first.

If following a refusal for emergency leave the colleague does not attend work, this would be classed as unauthorised absence which could be a conduct issue and should be fully investigated on their return to work.