



MEAL BREAK POLICY

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy supersedes all previous written policies, procedures and arrangements on the subject of Meal breaks within the Emergency Service. This also supersedes any prior agreements and policies inherited from predecessor Trusts.
- 1.2 The primary task of the Emergency Service is to provide a rapid response to all incidents, provide quality pre-hospital treatment and care, and safe supportive transport to treatment centres or onward referral to appropriate facilities where they exist.
- 1.3 **With effect from 1st June 2016**, the following arrangements will apply across West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (WMASFT) for staff working operationally within the Emergency Service.
- 1.4 The aim of this document is to provide an agreed understanding of how meal breaks should be managed by (WMASFT)
- 1.5 The Policy also enables Operational staff to be pro-active in requesting breaks.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The main objective is to try and ensure that all staff receive an uninterrupted unpaid meal break.
- 2.2 To ensure staff receive a meal break within a specified time frame or window and that interrupted rest/meal breaks are kept to an absolute minimum.
- 2.3 To ensure that the health and safety risks to employees of the Trust are reduced to their lowest practicable level as a result of delaying an appropriate rest/meal break when carrying out their duties. The Trust has a statutory obligation to ensure staff have an appropriate meal break in-line with current regulations
- 2.4 The Emergency Operations Centres are responsible for the allocation of operational meal breaks. They must ensure a balance between the resources available for responding to patient and the need to allocate meal breaks across a divisional area.
- 2.5 Operational staff may volunteer to be available, during their meal break window, subject to the criteria and arrangements set out in this document.

The Procedure for managing meal breaks has been split down into four main areas, namely a) Meal break timings; b) Interrupted Meal breaks, c) Compensatory Payments and d) Meal break Location

3 Operational Meal Break Shift Lengths

- 3.1 Leading up to meal breaks it is the responsibility of the EOC to manage the distribution of the available WMAS resources to try and ensure that appropriate cover is maintained during meal breaks, thereby minimising the potential for breaks to be disturbed.
- 3.2 There are some historical differences in the way meal breaks have been agreed and managed between divisions in the preceding years of operation. It is intended that these will not be changed or amended.
- 3.3 All staff will be entitled to the following **unpaid** meal breaks.

<u>Shift Length</u>	<u>Rest/Meal Break</u>
12 Hours	1 X 45 Minutes unpaid
10 Hours	1 X 37.5 Minutes unpaid
8 Hours	1 X 30 Minute unpaid

For the Coventry and Warwickshire Division and the Hereford & Worcester area, meal breaks will be 30mins and the remaining difference in minutes will be consolidated into accrued hours (calculated into the roster and or/leave/or toil as per local arrangements).

- 3.4 The meal break windows will apply to operational staff engaged in frontline operations as per Appendix 1.
- 3.5 Where two staff are crewed together, but are working different shift patterns (e.g. 0800 and 1000 starts) it will be the responsibility of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to ensure an appropriate meal break window is allocated. Whenever operationally possible this should coincide with the rest/meal break of the crew member with the earliest start. This should avoid excessive working without a break for that individual.
- 3.6 The EOC shall determine when staff will be stood down for a meal break within the agreed time windows set out in 3.2. However, the intention is to ensure, where operationally possible, that crews take their meal break at the nearest agreed point in their division, that is not a fire station, with the exception of RRVS and CPs as per 6.6.
- 3.7 Meal breaks will only be interrupted when an Emergency Red Call occurs and no other resource are available to respond or a delay will have a detrimental impact on the patient outcome such as a car versus pedestrian type RTC but only if you are on a disturbed break.
- 3.8 When the meal break window closes for the crew and they have not had their break they will be returned to the nearest available agreed facility for their break and they will not be allocated a further case until the meal break is completed.

4 Interrupted Rest/Meal Breaks

- 4.1** Only those staff who have voluntarily made themselves available to respond to a Red Call, will be disturbed.
- 4.2** Meal breaks will only be interrupted when an Emergency Red Call occurs and no other resource are available to respond only if you are on a disturbed meal break.
- 4.3** When more than one crew on station is on a disturbable meal break the crew who have been on a meal break for the shortest period will be activated to an emergency call if required. This will always be subject to the deployment of the most appropriate skill levels required to meet the presenting condition of the patient.
- 4.4** If a resource is disturbed for a meal break, after completion of the incident and with the crew's agreement they will be returned to the place where they were disturbed from to complete the remaining time left of their meal break which will be undisturbed to allow the crew to complete their meal break.

5 Compensatory Payment

- 5.1** Once a meal break has been allocated, only those staff who have volunteered to be available may be disturbed.
- 5.2** When any meal break is interrupted, staff will be entitled to claim a single one off compensatory payment of £10 for a disturbed meal break. . The resource will then be allocated their meal break following completion of the incident as outlined at 4.4.
- 5.3** All operational resources that are allocated a Meal Break off their base station will be entitled to claim a £5 reimbursement payment to cover the cost of purchasing additional food.
- 5.4** Compensatory payment will only be payable for one interruption which occurs.
- 5.5** Occasions will inevitably occur when a resource will be required to attend a call and will be unable to commence their meal break within the stated meal break windows. And therefore a single compensatory payment is payable for a Late break of £10.00. As per appendix 1.
- 5.6** On occasions when it has not been possible to provide a break, staff are entitled to claim the compensatory payment in addition to overtime payment or toil, or are able to finish shift as long as their contractual hours have been completed. EOC will however ensure that all staff have a meal break within a timely period, A MAX of £25.00 per shift is available max claim.

6 Location of Meal Breaks & Reimbursement Payment

- 6.1 This section applies to all staff.
- 6.2 Meal breaks will be allocated within the areas from where staff book on duty, for example Staffordshire resources will be allocated a meal break in Staffordshire, Birmingham staff in Birmingham, Black Country staff in Black Country, Coventry and Warwickshire staff in Coventry or Warwickshire, and for the purpose of this section, West Mercia staff will be allocated a meal break in their respective areas of booking on duty, areas are defined as Hereford, Shropshire and Worcester. EOC will put resources on break so that within the designated operating model so there is no detriment to patients.
- 6.3 All staff must be available at their finish of their meal break.
- 6.4 If a staff resource is on their base station within their meal break window, EOC have the option to allocate the resource a meal break at the resource base station.
- 6.5 If a resource comes clear at a patients location that does not require to be transported to a medical facility, and the resource is in its meal break window then EOC will allocate the resources for meal break to the nearest appropriate site in their locality, this will be an agreed site, or Trust Hub location that will not be a fire station unless already agreed (E.G Aston station, and CP sites for RRVs).
- 6.6 If a resource comes clear at a hospital location, and the resource is in its meal break window, the resource may be offered a meal break at the hospital subject to crew agreement and facilities being available. If not, then EOC will allocate the resources for meal break to the nearest appropriate agreed site.
- 6.7 A resource may be mobile to a post for standby and therefore if the resource is within the meal break window then EOC will allocate the resources for meal break site in their locality, which will be a Trust Hub location that will not be a fire station unless already agreed (E.G Aston station and CP sites for RRVs which is the RRVs base station only).
- 6.8 Staff may wish to go to a food outlet for their meal break instead of Hub location or agreed site, WMASFT are supportive of this however it's important that staff remember that they are in the public eye and appropriate professional behaviour is adhered to Staff will be placed on meal break 8 min from when they stop to purchase food and to start their meal break

- 6.9** Staff may wish to stop for food on the way to their base station or Hub location that's been allocated by EOC, WMASFT support this as long as there is no natural deviation from the route to the site that's been allocated, and that appropriate behaviour is observed. An 8 min allocation time is allocated at the point of when the vehicle stops to collect food. Any deviation will need to be agreed with EOC prior to any journey. (EOC will take into account the location and the time of day).
- 6.10** Definition of a suitable facility for meal breaks will be determined by the following:
- A specific designated Hub site or location that has been agreed within this agreement. (Appendix 2)
- 6.11** All operational resources that are allocated a Meal Break off their base station will be entitled to claim a £5 reimbursement payment to cover the cost of purchasing additional food.
- 6.12** Subsequently staff that are disturbed whilst at an 'Off Base' location, they will also become eligible to claim a £10 compensatory payment in 5.1 above.
- 6.13** Staff that have independent dietary requirements due to an ongoing medical condition, or equality needs, will be dealt with on an individual basis by their manager who will Communicate these requirements to EOC confidentially.

7 EOC Staff Meal Breaks and DSE Breaks

- 7.1** All EOC staff are entitled to meal breaks as those afforded to operational colleagues.
- 7.2** The same unpaid rest periods apply to EOC staff as documented in 3.1 above.
- 7.3** The meal break arrangements within the EOC have been agreed jointly with staff side and take into account the HSE Regulations 1992 around working with display screen equipment (DSE) and the requirement for EOC staff, as constant users of DSE, to receive appropriate time away from their computer screens. Therefore the following breaks within each shift have been agreed.

Shift length (hours)	Breaks in length (Minutes)			
8	25	30	15	
9	15	30	15	15
10	15	30	20	15
12	30	20	30	20

- 7.4** The allocation of these breaks will be undertaken in accordance with the EOC Duty Manager and Call Supervisor and will be evenly spread throughout the shift to ensure EOC staff have adequate rest periods and breaks away from CAD during their shift.
- 7.5** There may be occasions where bespoke shifts of shorter length are undertaken where DSE Break allocation will be given in accordance with the regulatory guidelines.

8 Monitoring

- 8.1** The WMASFT will ensure that monitoring arrangements are in place to provide evidence of compliance with the above guidelines. Records of occasions when meal breaks are interrupted will be published on a monthly basis for the information of Staff if requested.
- 8.2** The WMASFT Computer Aided dispatch (CAD) system will record all the meal break events associated with an operational resource. It will therefore form the basis for determining the actual time taken for each break period. The CAD system clock will be the only time source used to record meal break allocations; any discrepancies will be referenced against this time record only.

9 Additional Points

- 9.1** The Trust will supply a small personal issue cool bag to each member of operational staff so food can be carried in the front of the vehicle.

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Appendix One – Meal Break Matrix

Shift Time	Duration	Meal Break Window	Claim justified if break starts on/or later than
0600-1400	8 hours	0900-1100	10.45
0700-1500	8 hours	1000-1200	11.45
0800-1600	8 hours	1100-1300	12.45
0900-1700	8 hours	1200-1400	13.45
1000-1800	8 hours	1300-1500	14.45
1100-1900	8 hours	1400-1600	15.45
1200-2000	8 hours	1500-1700	16.45
1400-2200	8 hours	1700-1900	18.45
1500-2300	8 hours	1800-2000	19.45
1600-0001	8 hours	1900-2100	20.45
1700-0100	8 hours	2000-2200	21.45
1800-0200	8 hours	2100-2300	22.45
2200-0600	8 hours	0100-0300	02.45
2300-0700	8 hours	0200-0400	03.45
0001-0800	8 hours	0300-0500	04.45
0600-1600	10 hours	1000-1300	12.45
0700-1700	10 hours	1100-1400	13.45
0800-1800	10 hours	1200-1500	14.45
0900-1900	10 hours	1300-1600	15.45
1000-2000	10 hours	1400-1700	16.45
1100-2100	10 hours	1500-1800	17.45
1300-2300	10 hours	1700-2000	19.45
1400-0001	10 hours	1800-2100	20.45
1600-0200	10 hours	2000-2300	22.45
0600-1800	12 hours	1000-1400	13.45
0630-1830	12 hours	1030-1430	14.15
0700-1900	12 hours	1100-1500	14.45
0730-1930	12 hours	1130-1530	15.15
0800-2000	12 hours	1200-1600	15.45
0900-2100	12 hours	1300-1700	16.45
1000-2200	12 hours	1400-1800	17.45
1100-2300	12 hours	1500-1900	18.45
1200-0001	12 hours	1600-2000	19.45
1800-0600	12 hours	2200-0200	01.45
1830-0630	12 hours	2230-0230	02.15
1900-0700	12 hours	2300-0300	02.45
1930-0730	12 hours	2330-0330	03.15
2000-0800	12 hours	0001-0400	03.45

Appendix Two – Meal break Facilities

Birmingham Meal break facilities

Erdington Hub	Opus Aspects ,Chester road Birmingham
Aston CAS	Ettington Road, Aston, Birmingham
Hollymoor Hub	Hollymoor Point, Hollymoor, Rubery Birmingham
Solihull CAS	Mallory House Buildings, Lode Lane, Solihull Hospital.

Black Country Meal break facilities

Willenhall Hub	Electrium Point, Ashmore Lake Way, Willenhall
Dudley Hub	Burton Road, Dudley
Pensnett CAS	Unit 10 Darwin House, Innovation Centre, Pensnett, Kingswinford.
Sandwell Hub	Hargate Lane, West Bromwich
Lye CAS	Unit 10 Lye Business centre, Enterprise Drive

Coventry and Warwickshire Meal break facilities

Coventry Hub	Ibstock Road, Coventry
Warwick Hub	Goggbridge Lane, Tournament fields, Warwick

Staffordshire Meal break facilities

Stoke Hub	Hilton Road, Penkull, Stoke on Trent
Tollgate unit 2 EOC	Tollgate Drive, Tollgate Industrial Estate Staffordshire
Lichfield Hub	Eastern Park, Eastern Avenue, Staffordshire.

West Mercia Meal break facilities

Bromsgrove Hub	Barnsley Hall Drive, Bromsgrove
Donnington Hub	Wrekin Drive, Donnington, Telford
Hereford Hub	Ross Road, Grafton, Hereford
Shrewsbury Hub	Mercian Close, Longden Road, Shrewsbury
Worcestershire Hub	Spetchley Road, Worcester