



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Tuesday, January 21, 1997

CPM 97-02

MEMORANDUM FOR: Other Stakeholders

FROM: Rosalie A. Cameron, IAG CHAIR

Subject: Revised Washington, DC Area Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has made two policy changes in the Washington, DC, Area Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures. We request that you take this opportunity to remind all employees of the procedures for emergency dismissal or closure. These procedures supersede the procedures issued on October 30, 1996.

Effective immediately, in those rare events that require an early work dismissal or late work arrival due to severe inclement dangerous weather or other types of emergency situations, OPM may authorize an "adjusted work dismissal" policy or an "adjusted home departure" policy. In both of these situations, the time period an employee will be excused from work will be guided by the employee's normal departure times from home or work.

An "adjusted work dismissal" policy permits employees to leave work early relative to their normal departure times. For example, if a 3-hour early dismissal is authorized by OPM as a result of the approach of a hurricane or snowstorm, employees who would normally leave work at 5 p.m. would be authorized to leave at 2 p.m. The "adjusted work dismissal" policy replaces the "residential zone dismissal" plan. The former "residential zone dismissal" plan for early dismissal depended upon the location of the employees' homes, rather than their working hours. Oftentimes, this resulted in confusion as to when employees should leave their workplaces. The commuting patterns of the Capital area have changed greatly over the past 4 decades of population growth, and the already overloaded highway and public transportation systems are overwhelmed by the "residential zone dismissal" concept. We believe the new "adjusted work dismissal" policy will greatly improve employees' commutes.

An "adjusted home departure" policy permits employees to leave their homes later than their normal departure times. For example, if OPM announces that an "adjusted home departure" policy is in effect and employees should delay their normal departure time for 2 hours, employees who normally leave for work at 7 a.m. would delay departure until 9 a.m. Nonemergency employees who arrive late will be excused without loss of pay or charge to leave. The "adjusted home departure" policy replaces the "delayed arrival" policy. The former "delayed arrival" policy directed employees to arrive at work at a certain announced time. Many employees left their homes earlier than usual to allow more time for the commute. This resulted in putting more people on the roads earlier and hindering efforts to clear unsafe roads. The new

"adjusted home departure" policy provides work crews the extra time needed to remove snow and salt icy and snowy roads before drivers begin their commutes to work.

These new policies will also be effective in situations where there is a widespread power failure and there is a need to reduce the use of power in office buildings. Of course, exceptions will be made for situations in which the Federal Government must close immediately or at a specific time--e.g., a major power shortage resulting in an urgent need to close office buildings or an advancing hurricane that is expected to hit the area within a relatively short period of time.

The business of the Federal Government is vital to serving the public everywhere. Therefore, we will make a determined effort to avoid the widespread curtailment of public services in the Washington, DC, area. We encourage and will follow a policy of allowing more general use of unscheduled leave so that employees who truly find it impossible or unsafe to make it to work or who arrive late can use annual leave or leave without pay, while the essential functions of the Government continue with the employees who are able to make it to work on time. Further, on those days that we do not declare an unscheduled leave policy because conditions generally are not bad, we encourage agencies and supervisors to be sensitive to the fact that localized weather and road conditions may preclude some employees from safely commuting to work and to grant unscheduled annual leave or leave without pay to such workers.

It is essential that Federal agencies comply with the Washington, DC, Area Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures, which were developed in consultation with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). Independent action by agencies should be avoided because any changes in the working hours of Federal employees in this area must be coordinated carefully with municipal and regional officials in order to minimize disruption of the highway and mass transit systems.

For non-Internet users, a copy of the Washington, DC, Area Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures is available for download from OPM's electronic bulletin board system (BBS). You may access the BBS on your modem by dialing (202) 606-4800. These procedures are also being shared with Federal Executive Boards and Federal Executive Associations nationwide as a recommended approach to be used in their coverage areas.

Washington, DC Area Personnel Directors may consult a special phone line to hear a recorded message on current weather status and/or the status of Government operations. The telephone number is unchanged from previous years. If you need the telephone number, or if you are a new member of the Interagency Advisory Group (IAG), please call Charles Kawecky on (202) 606-2166 to arrange access to the system.

To access information about the current DC Area Federal Government Operating Status, you may view this information on OPM's website or consult the OPM electronic bulletin board system and select [W]eather from the main menu.