



The Director

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

DEC 15 2010

**MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES**

**FROM: JOHN BERRY  
DIRECTOR**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Berry".

**Subject: Washington, DC, Area, Dismissal and Closure Procedures**

After the historic winter of 2009-2010, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is pleased to introduce a new way for agencies and employees to maintain productivity and continuity of operations during snow and other emergencies. **Unscheduled telework** is a new option that for Federal employees to telework from home, to the extent possible, when severe weather conditions or other circumstances disrupt commuting.

Unscheduled telework supports and encourages the trend toward informal telework that we observed last winter and in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. President Obama has made it clear: the work of the Federal Government should never stop because of snow. Therefore, to provide efficient, effective service to the American people, OPM's goal is to have as many Federal employees as possible working during snow or other emergencies.

Although Federal offices were closed to the public during the winter of 2009-2010 for 5 days, essential Government business continued, as many dedicated Federal employees worked from home. This year, our goal is to have even more employees working during periods when the Federal Government announces unscheduled leave and unscheduled telework, early departure, delayed arrival, or when Federal offices are closed to the public.

In recent years, OPM has stressed the importance of making telework a standard part of all agency emergency planning to ensure the Federal Government continues to carry out its mission-essential functions. The importance of telework in emergency planning has only been further magnified by the recent Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, which requires that all agencies implement telework into their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) by June 2011. In preparation for these emergency situations, agencies should have telework policies in place that provide instructions and expectations of the employee. The key to successful use of telework for these purposes is an effective routine telework program. To operate as intended, telework must be a regular and recurring activity for eligible employees, and employees should regularly practice teleworking.

The unscheduled telework option will allow more Federal employees to telework from home, to the extent practicable, when severe weather conditions or other circumstances disrupt or prevent employees from commuting or reporting to work in the Washington, DC, area. It will help maintain the productivity and resilience of the Federal workforce

during heavy snow accumulation, reasons of national security special events, and other regional emergencies and help ensure the safety of our employees.

### **Agency Responsibilities**

*Establish Telework Policies.* To implement the unscheduled telework flexibility, agencies should (1) review their current telework policies to ensure that telework is integrated as part of the flexibilities permitted during disruption of normal operating procedures; (2) ensure that the IT infrastructure is in place to allow large numbers of employees to telework simultaneously; (3) require all employees are authorized to practice it frequently enough to maintain effectiveness and ensure functionality; and (4) establish new ad hoc telework arrangements for employees who can telework, but typically do not (or do so informally), such as most managers.

*Data Collection.* To assess the effectiveness of this new agency flexibility, OPM is also requesting that each agency provide data regarding the number of employees that are teleworking on any day when OPM announces any of the following for the Washington, DC, area:

- OPEN—WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK;
- OPEN—XX HOUR DELAYED ARRIVAL WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK **or**
- FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

OPM requests that each agency use the attached spreadsheet when transmitting the telework data to OPM and that the data be sent to OPM no later than 2 weeks following the date of one of the three announcements listed above. Please send the telework data to Gary Lukowski, Manager, Data Analysis Group, Office of Planning and Policy Analysis at [Gary.Lukowski@opm.gov](mailto:Gary.Lukowski@opm.gov). Questions on telework policy may be sent to Marie L'Etoile, Manager, Work/Life/Wellness, Agency & Veterans Support, at [Marie.Letoile@opm.gov](mailto:Marie.Letoile@opm.gov).

### **Announcements**

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* have been developed in consultation with Federal agencies and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and are available at <https://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>. The updated procedures are based on the principle that the Federal Government's vital business must be carried on without compromising the safety of our employees and the community. Agencies should avoid independent action in the event of area-wide work disruptions because any changes in the commuting hours of Federal employees must be coordinated carefully with municipal and regional officials in order to minimize disruption of the highway and mass transit systems. This handbook does not apply to pandemic situations.

Announcements on the status of Government operations will be available at [http://www.opm.gov/Operating\\_Status\\_Schedules](http://www.opm.gov/Operating_Status_Schedules). Recorded messages on operating

status also will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison on (202) 606-1900.

**For More Information**

For more information, agency Chief Human Capital Officers and/or Human Resources (HR) Directors may contact their assigned OPM Human Capital Officers. For additional information on Federal pay, leave, and work scheduling policies, please visit <http://www.opm.gov/oca/index.asp>. Employees should contact their agency human resources offices for assistance.

Attachments:

Washington, DC, Area, Dismissal and Closure Procedures  
Telework Data Collection Spreadsheet

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers  
Human Resources Directors

**Telework Data Collection Spreadsheet**

Agencies should use this form for reporting telework information when OPM announces the following operating status under the Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures: OPEN—WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK, OPEN—XX HOUR DELAYED ARRIVAL WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK , or FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC. The immediate Washington, DC, area includes the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties, and the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church in Virginia.

Your Agency Name:

	Total number of employees in the immediate Washington, DC, area	Number of employees that reported to work	Number of employees with a telework agreement	Number of employees that teleworked	Number of employees taking leave
All Employees					
Emergency Workers					
Non Emergency Workers					
SES, Executive Level, and Supervisors/Managers					
GS 14 and 15					
All Other					

Please provide the following information about the individual who provided this information

Last Name:

First Name:

Email Address:

Telephone Number:

## A Message from the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management

After the historic winter of 2009-2010, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is pleased to introduce a new way for agencies and employees to maintain productivity and continuity of operations during snow and other emergencies without compromising the safety of our employees or the general public. **Unscheduled telework** is a new option for Federal employees to telework, to the extent possible, when severe weather conditions or other circumstances disrupt commuting.

Unscheduled telework supports and encourages the trend toward informal telework that we observed last winter and in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. President Obama has made it clear: the work of the Federal Government should never stop because of snow. Therefore, to provide efficient, effective service to the American people, OPM's goal is to have as many Federal employees as possible working during snow or other emergencies.

Although Federal offices were closed to the public during the winter of 2009-2010 for 5 days, essential Government business continued as many dedicated Federal employees worked from home. This year, our goal is to have even more employees working during periods when the Federal Government has announced unscheduled annual leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, early departure, or Federal offices are closed to the public. Unscheduled telework will help maintain the productivity and resilience of the Federal workforce during heavy snow accumulation, reasons of national security special events, and other regional emergencies and help ensure the safety of our employees.

To implement an unscheduled telework option, agencies should (1) review their current telework policies to ensure that telework is integrated as part of the flexibilities permitted during disruption of normal operating procedures; 2) ensure that the IT infrastructure is in place to allow large numbers of employees to telework simultaneously; (3) ensure all employees who are authorized to telework practice it frequently to maintain effectiveness and ensure functionality; and (4) establish new ad-hoc telework arrangements for employees who can telework, but typically do not (or do so informally), such as most managers.

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* have been developed over the years in consultation with Federal agencies and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and are available at <https://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>. The updated procedures are based on the principle that the Federal Government's vital business must be carried on without compromising the safety of our employees and the community. Agencies should avoid independent action in the event of area-wide work disruptions because any changes in the commuting hours of Federal employees must be coordinated carefully with municipal and regional officials in order to minimize disruption of the highway and mass transit systems.

  
John Berry  
Director

# Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

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Appendix: OPM Announcements on the Status of Federal Government Operations in the Washington, DC, Area

## I. Introduction

The following guidelines apply to situations that prevent significant numbers of Federal employees working inside the Washington Capital Beltway in the Washington, DC, area from reporting for work on time or remaining at work for the full workday, and for situations which require Federal offices to close to the public, including during emergency situations, adverse weather conditions, natural disasters, and other incidents causing disruptions of Government operations. It is important for the Federal Government to remain in operation even if offices are closed to the public. Federal Executive Boards coordinate similar dismissal or closure procedures in other major metropolitan areas.

### *Telework during Dismissal or Closure Situations*

For many years, the Federal Government has used telework as a viable alternative to allow Federal employees to complete their work from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work, which typically is a Federal office. As recently defined in law by the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (the Act), the term “telework” or “teleworking” refers to a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of such employee’s position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

In order to use this flexibility, the Act requires a written telework agreement and telework training for employees and managers. A teleworking employee and his or her manager should enter into a written agreement for every type of telework, whether the employee teleworks regularly or not. The agreement provides the framework for the discussion that needs to take place between the manager and the employee about expectations. The parameters of telework agreements are most often laid out by the agency policy and/or collective bargaining agreement and typically spell out the days and time the employee is regularly scheduled to telework. In addition, agencies are to provide interactive training to ensure that employees and managers have the skills to effectively engage in telework.

In recent years, OPM has stressed the importance of making telework a standard part of all agency emergency planning. The Act now requires that all agencies implement telework into their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) by June 2011. In preparation for these emergency situations, agencies should have telework policies in place that provide instructions and expectations of the employee. Agencies should ensure that the equipment, technology, and technical support have been tested; employees are comfortable with technology and communications methods; and that managers are comfortable managing a distributed workgroup. Agency telework policies and individual telework agreements should spell out whether the employee is expected to work from home on days that they are regularly scheduled to telework and the Federal Government has announced unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, early departure, or that offices are closed to the public.

This year, the Federal Government is introducing a new flexibility, **unscheduled**

**telework**, which will allow more Federal employees to telework from home, to the extent practicable, when severe weather conditions or other circumstances disrupt or prevent employees from commuting or reporting to work in the Washington, DC, area. This new flexibility was developed in recognition of our evolving use of technology and increased use of telework and other workplace flexibilities. Unscheduled telework will help the Federal Government maximize operational efficiency and minimize disruptions. This will be done without compromising the safety of our employees and the general public during heavy snow accumulation, significant road closures due to events, and other emergency situations. When there are disruptions of Government operations, OPM will make announcements to the public and the media on the status of operations for Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area. Section III of this Handbook provides additional information on how unscheduled telework will be incorporated into our current emergency procedures.

OPM encourages agencies to review their current telework arrangements and establish agreements with all employees who are (1) scheduled to telework or (2) have the potential to telework (i.e., unscheduled telework) at any time during the year, including during severe weather conditions and other emergency situations. Special attention should be paid to those employees who will telework only on an occasional, situational basis during events or circumstances that disrupt or prevent commuting or reporting to work at the office. It is important to emphasize, however, that the key to successful use of telework for these purposes is an effective routine telework program. Snow emergencies, for example, may be rare events, but to operate as intended, telework must be a regular and recurring activity for eligible employees. Employees should regularly practice teleworking.

### *Application of Emergency Procedures*

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* apply to employees in all Executive agencies with offices located inside the “Washington Capital Beltway” (the highway that circles the Nation’s capital). In addition, Executive agencies may determine to apply these same procedures to facilities located in the Counties and jurisdictions outside of the beltway but adjacent to the District of Columbia (i.e., Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties, and the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church in Virginia), although they may prefer to develop separate plans, since they may be subject to different weather and traffic conditions than those inside the Beltway. In very rare circumstances, OPM may issue guidelines affecting agency facilities outside the Washington Capital Beltway, as well. Note, however, that these procedures do not apply to employees of the U.S. Postal Service, the government of the District of Columbia, or private sector entities, including contractors.

It is essential that the applicable Federal agencies comply with this area-wide plan and the announcements concerning dismissal or closure of offices to the public in the Washington, DC, area. These procedures are based on the principle that the business of the Federal Government is vital to serving the public everywhere and that we must do so without compromising the safety of our employees. Agencies should avoid independent action. Agencies generally look to OPM to coordinate any decisions to dismiss Federal



employees from work with officials in local and Federal agencies, transportation authorities, and the media so as to minimize disruption of the highway and transit systems, reduce traffic congestion, and ensure that affected employees are treated as consistently as possible. Therefore, all employees are expected to report for work or remain at work except as provided by these procedures. Application of this guidance should be consistent with the provisions of applicable collective bargaining agreements, telework policies and agreements, or other controlling policies, authorities, and instructions.

## **II. Requirements for Emergency Employees and Telework**

### ***Emergency Employees***

As the President's advisor on human resources policies, OPM advises agencies to designate in advance those *emergency employees* who are critical to agency operations (including security and infrastructure) in dismissal or closure situations and will be expected to work. Because of the diversity in agency missions, employee occupations/skills, nature of the emergency, time of the year, geographic location, and many other factors, OPM does not provide standard Governmentwide definitions of emergency employees. Each agency is in the best position to determine its own needs. Thus, agency heads (or their designees, as applicable) are responsible for making such determinations based on the agency's unique mission requirements and/or circumstances. The designation of *emergency employees* may vary according to the particular nature of an exigency. Such designations may include any employees who are part of an agency's emergency response plans and continuity of operations plans (COOP). Any such designations should be communicated (preferably well in advance), so employees can be prepared to support and sustain agency operations.

Emergency employees are expected to report to or remain at their worksite in dismissal or emergency situations unless otherwise directed by their agencies. In rare circumstances, an agency may determine that circumstances justify excusing an emergency employee from duty. An agency may grant a reasonable amount of excused absence to an emergency employee who is unable to report for work when he or she has an individual hardship or circumstances unique to the employee. For example, factors such as distance, availability of public transportation, available alternatives to childcare or eldercare, or health/medical limitations may be considered.

In an extended emergency, an agency may also determine that changing circumstances require non-emergency employees to report for or remain at work when Government operations are disrupted and offices are closed to the public. Consequently, each agency should establish a procedure for notifying and recalling these employees. OPM advises agencies to identify a cadre of employees who are expected to work at or remain in contact with their agencies at all times during any dismissal or closure situation to maintain continuity of Government operations (COOP). Such employees may be called to work during emergencies dealing with national security, extended emergencies, or other unique situations. Agencies should anticipate the emergency situations in which such employees will be expected to report for work at a regular worksite, alternative worksite, or by telework, and notify affected employees of this policy. Agencies may want to issue communications and other equipment to these employees to facilitate

contact in emergency situations.

### *Telework Employees*

OPM has previously stressed the importance of making telework a standard part of all agency emergency planning to ensure the Federal Government continues to carry out its essential functions, and now the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 requires agencies to integrate telework into their COOP plans. Employees' telework agreements should spell out whether the employee is expected to work from home or an alternative site on days that they are regularly scheduled to telework when the Federal Government has announced unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, early departure, or Federal offices are closed to the public. OPM advises agencies to review their current telework policies regularly and establish policies regarding who is required to work when under these dismissal and closure procedures.

Further, under OPM's new policy for unscheduled telework, agencies have the opportunity to increase the use of telework when establishing new telework policies, and should consider modifying or renegotiating current telework policies to require any employee with a telework agreement to work on a day when the Government declares emergency dismissal and closure procedures irrespective of whether that employee was previously scheduled to telework. In essence, all employees with telework agreements could potentially be required by their agencies to telework on a day when Federal offices are closed to the public, and be expected to work from home or at an alternative location (e.g., telework center). Any requirement that a telework employee continue to work if Federal offices are closed to the public (or during delayed arrivals and early dismissals) on his or her telework day or on any of his or her regularly scheduled workdays are subject to collective bargaining and should be included explicitly in the agency's telework policy and the employee's written telework agreement.

**OPM strongly encourages agencies to maintain a viable telework-ready workforce. This requires practice and testing equipment and procedures regularly throughout the year, not just teleworking during blue moon emergencies. Thus, all telework employees should have the opportunity or be required to telework regularly throughout the year. This will help ensure that all telework employees will be effective and efficient on a day when Federal offices are closed to the public in the Washington, DC, area.**

As permitted by their agency's policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, non-emergency telework employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework. When OPM announces late arrival or early dismissal procedures, telework employees may also request appropriate leave, earned compensatory time off, credit hours (if permitted) or reschedule their alternative work schedule (AWS) day off when additional time off is needed. Agencies may also consider exercising their authority to provide excused absence to telework employees on a case-by case basis (e.g., electricity, infrastructure/connectivity issues, childcare or eldercare issues) when they are required to work when Federal offices are closed to the public.

***No Additional Pay or Paid Time Off for Employees Who Must Work***

Employees who are required to work on site (e.g., the office) or telework during their regular tour of duty on a day when Federal offices are closed to the public (or when other employees are authorized a delayed arrival or early dismissal) are not entitled to receive overtime pay, credit hours, or compensatory time off for performing work during their regularly scheduled non-overtime hours.

### ***Failure to Work***

An emergency employee is required to work on a day when Federal offices are closed to the public (or when other employees are authorized a delayed arrival or early dismissal), and for such an employee, the day is a workday and time and attendance rules apply.

A telework employee may be required to work (based on agency policies and individual telework agreements, which may be subject to collective bargaining) on a day when Federal offices are closed to the public (or when employees working at the office receive either a delayed arrival or early dismissal), and for such an employee, the day is a workday and time and attendance rules apply.

However in unique situations, an agency may determine that circumstances justify excusing an *emergency employee* or a *telework employee* (required to work based on agency policies and individual telework agreements, which may be subject to collective bargaining), and such an employee may be granted excused absence by the agency.

If an employee who is required to work fails to report for work without adequate reason for his or her absence, the agency may choose to place the employee on absence without leave (AWOL), and the employee may potentially be disciplined for AWOL by the agency. Each agency is responsible for determining whether the employee has adequate reasons for his or her absence.

For employees who are not designated as emergency employees or not required to telework (based on agency policies and individual telework agreements, which may be subject to collective bargaining), when the employee's office is closed to the public, the day is a non-workday and such employees may not be charged leave on that day. (This policy does not apply under delayed arrival or early dismissal announcements.)

## **III. OPM Guidance on Dismissal and Closure Procedures**

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* uses the following announcements:

### **1. OPEN**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees are expected to report to their worksite or begin telework on time.”

Normal operating procedures are in effect. Employees account for their hours of work by **WATS**:

- Working at a worksite (typically the office) in the DC area,
- Alternative work schedules (AWS) day off,
- Teleworking (at home or at a telework center), or
- Scheduled leave or other paid time off.

## **2. OPEN WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** and employees have the **OPTION** for **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.**”

Non-emergency employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework. Eligible employees may-

- Use annual leave, earned compensatory time off, earned credit hours, or leave without pay; or
- As permitted by their agency’s policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, telework from home on a non-telework day, if the employee has a telework agreement in place that is approved for unscheduled telework.

Employees *scheduled to telework on the day of the announcement* are expected to begin telework on time or request unscheduled leave.

Non-emergency employees may request supervisory approval to change their AWS day off or rearrange their work hours under a flexible work schedule.

Non-emergency employees may request sick leave if they meet the qualifying conditions under law, OPM regulations, and follow their agency’s policies and procedures.

*Emergency employees* are expected to report to their worksite on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

## **3. OPEN – XX HOUR DELAYED ARRIVAL -- WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** under **XX HOUR DELAYED ARRIVAL** and employees have the **OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.** Employees should plan to arrive for work no more than xx hours later than they would normally arrive. ”

Non-emergency employees are expected to report to their office for work no later than the designated number of hours provided past their normal arrival time. Employees should plan their commutes so that they arrive for work no more than xx hours later than they would normally arrive. For example, if OPM announces a 2-hour delayed arrival policy, employees who normally arrive at 8:00 a.m. must arrive for work no later than 10:00 a.m. Such employees will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for up to the designated number of hours past their normal arrival time.

An employee who arrives later than the designated number of hours should be charged annual leave for the excess time. For example, if OPM announces a 2-hour **delayed arrival policy**, and an employee arrives for work 3 hours later than his/her normal arrival time, the employee should be charged annual leave for 1 hour. However, in the case of unusual circumstances or hardship, an agency may determine to grant excused absence for the excess time.

Note: For employees working under flexible work schedules, agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>. Employees under flexible work schedules may also request a change in their work schedules.

Non-emergency employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework. They may-

- Use annual leave, earned compensatory time off, earned credit hours, or leave without pay; or
- As permitted by their agency's policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, telework from home on a non-telework day, if the employee has a telework agreement in place that is approved for unscheduled telework.

Non-emergency employees may request sick leave if they meet the qualifying conditions under law, OPM regulations, and follow their agency's policies and procedures.

Employees *scheduled to telework on the day of the announcement* are expected to begin telework on time or request unscheduled leave.

*Emergency employees* are expected to report to their worksite on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

#### 4. OPEN - XX HOUR EARLY DEPARTURE

"Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees should depart **XX HOURS** earlier than their normal departure time from work."

Non-emergency employees will be dismissed from their office early relative to their normal departure times from work and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday beyond their designated *early departure time*. For example, if a 3-hour early departure is announced, employees who normally leave their offices at 5:00 p.m. would be authorized to leave at 2:00 p.m. (i.e., the employee's *early departure time*).

Note: For employees under flexible work schedules, agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website

at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>.

As permitted by their agency's policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, and with prior supervisory approval, a telework-ready employee who is located in the Washington, DC, area may depart prior to the scheduled early departure time without charge to annual leave provided the employee makes up the work time later in the day by teleworking.

*Emergency employees and telework employees* are expected to remain on duty, unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

### ***Exceptions***

*Personal situations.* Supervisors may exempt individual employees from *early departure times* to avoid personal hardships (e.g., when there is no available public transportation or no alternative forms of child/elder care are available to the employee). However, agencies should bear in mind that the purpose of the early departure policy is to allow an orderly release of Federal employees in the Washington, DC, area so as to avoid traffic gridlock and overcrowding of the public transit systems.

*Employee who leaves before early departure policy is announced or before his or her early departure time.* An employee who leaves work before an early departure policy is announced, or before his or her *early departure time*, should be charged annual leave or leave without pay beginning at the time the employee left work and for the remainder of his or her scheduled workday (unless agency policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements allow a telework-ready employee to obtain supervisory approval to leave early and complete the workday at home teleworking). However, agencies may exempt individual employees from *early departure times* and grant a reasonable amount of excused absence to allow an employee to leave work early if he or she has an individual hardship or unique circumstance. For example, factors such as distance, availability of public transportation, or childcare or eldercare responsibilities may be considered.

*Telework.* Depending on their agency's policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, and as defined in an employee's individual telework agreement, a telework employee may be required to continue to work at the telework site to complete the workday when an early office departure policy is announced.

*Employee who teleworks from a remote location.* Depending on their agency's policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, and as defined in an employee's individual telework agreement, an employee who teleworks from a remote location may be required to continue working when early departure procedures are implemented in the Washington, DC, area. If the agencies in the area of the employee's remote telework location announce an early departure policy because of adverse weather conditions (e.g., a snow emergency), the employee should follow his or her agency's policies and procedures.

*Employee on pre-approved leave or employee who has requested unscheduled leave.* An employee on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or an employee who has

requested unscheduled leave before an early departure policy is announced should be charged annual or sick leave for the entire workday. An employee scheduled to take pre-approved leave commencing after his or her *early departure time* (e.g., for a doctor's appointment) may not be charged leave for that period. Instead, the employee should be granted excused absence for the remainder of the workday following his or her *early departure time*.

*Employee on official travel.* An employee who is on official travel during normal working hours when an agency dismisses its employees early is not entitled to additional pay or paid time off (e.g., compensatory time off or credit hours).

*Employee scheduled to return to work.* If an employee is scheduled to return from leave after an early departure policy is announced, the agency should charge leave for the period prior to the employee's *early departure time* and grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following the employee's *early departure time*.

## **5. FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.**

**“FEDERAL OFFICES in the Washington, DC, area are CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.”**

*Emergency employees* are expected to report for work on time.

Non-emergency employees (including employees on pre-approved paid leave) will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours they were scheduled to work unless covered by one of the exceptions listed below.

### ***Exceptions***

*Employee who is required to telework.* Depending on their agency's policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements, and as defined in an employee's individual telework agreement, telework employees may be required to work when Federal offices are closed to the public.

*Employee who teleworks from a remote location.* Depending on their agency's policies, procedures and collective bargaining agreements, and as defined in an employee's individual telework agreement, an employee who teleworks from a remote location may be required to work during any closure of his or her regular worksite. If Federal offices in the area of the employee's telework site are closed to the public because of adverse weather conditions (e.g., a snow emergency), the employee should follow his or her agency's policies and procedures.

*Employee on official travel.* If a non-emergency employee is on official travel on a workday when his or her agency offices are closed to the public in the Washington, DC, area, the employee is expected to continue working. However, if the emergency procedures of the agency make it impossible for the employee to continue work--i.e., the travel assignment requires frequent contact with the agency in the Washington, DC, area--**excused absence may be appropriate. The agency is responsible for determining** whether an employee is required to continue working or will be granted excused absence

under these circumstances.

*Employee on leave without pay.* An employee on leave without pay, leave without pay for military duty, workers' compensation, suspension, or in another nonpay status does not receive excused absence when an agency is operating under emergency procedures. These employees should remain in their current status. An employee in a nonpay status has no expectation of working and receiving pay for a day during which Federal offices are closed to the public and is therefore not entitled to be paid for his or her absence.

*Employee on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off.* If Federal offices are closed to the public on the employee's regular AWS day off, he or she is not entitled to an additional "in lieu of" day off. An AWS employee who fulfills his or her biweekly work requirement in less than 10 working days is already entitled to an AWS day off. Such employees may not receive an additional day off. In addition, an employee cannot be excused from duty on a nonworkday. An AWS employee whose agency's offices are closed to the public on his or her AWS day off may not be granted excused absence for the scheduled nonworkday.

## **IV. OPM and Agency Responsibilities**

### ***OPM's Responsibilities***

1. In the Washington, DC, area, OPM is the Federal Government's point of contact with municipal governments and regional organizations, such as the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (METRO). OPM officials will consult with various officials, including appropriate DC government, municipal and regional officials before the Director makes a decision on dismissal, early departure, closure of Federal offices, or special leave treatment.
2. The Director of OPM will make a decision on the status of Federal operations. This decision will be based on the need to keep Federal operations functioning as normally as possible and our concern for the safety of Federal employees.
3. OPM will notify agency Chief Human Capital Officers and Human Resources Directors of any decision to order Federal agencies to announce an unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework policy, a delayed arrival policy, or an early dismissal policy, or to close Federal offices to the public. Information will be available at [http://www.opm.gov/Operating\\_Status\\_Schedules](http://www.opm.gov/Operating_Status_Schedules) or by phone at (202) 606-1900. (See also Appendix: OPM Announcements on the Status of Government Operations, of these procedures.)

### ***Agencies' Responsibilities***

1. At least annually, agencies should establish and publicize written procedures for unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, early departure, and Federal offices are closed to the public for employees working in the Washington, DC, area. The notice should tell employees how they will be notified and include the text of the media announcements to be used and a detailed explanation of their meaning.



2. Agencies should notify employees of the procedures for requesting leave on days when the unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework policy is in effect. When an unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework day is announced, employees must notify their supervisors of their intent to take unscheduled leave.
3. At least annually, agencies should identify *emergency employees* (including COOP employees) and notify them in writing. The written notice should include the requirement that *emergency employees* report for work or remain at work (or work at home or report to an alternative worksite) when Government operations are disrupted and an explanation that announcements of unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, early departure, or Federal offices are closed to the public in the Washington, DC, area do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise. For telework employees, requirements should be explicit in the telework agreements. If an agency determines that certain circumstances may require non-emergency employees to report for work or remain at work when Government operations are disrupted, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.
4. To implement the unscheduled telework option, agencies should (1) review their current telework policies to ensure that telework is integrated as part of the flexibilities permitted during disruption of normal operating procedures; (2) ensure that the IT infrastructure is in place to allow large numbers of employees to telework simultaneously; (3) establish new ad-hoc telework arrangements for employees who can telework, and wish to do so on an ad hoc basis, but typically do not; and (4) permit or require all employees who can telework, and wish to do so on at least an ad hoc basis, to practice it regularly and frequently to maintain effectiveness and ensure functionality.
5. OPM urges agencies to expand their telework policies, procedures, and individual agreements, through collective bargaining procedures, as applicable, so that when OPM announces that Federal offices in the Washington, DC, area are closed to the public, those employees with telework agreements will be expected to work on those days rather than receive excused absence. Agencies and employees should take into account the quid pro quo benefits of telework. That is, telework is an option to maintain work productivity without compromising employee safety. Using telework as an option when announcements for unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, or early departure are made will likely be more frequent than when announcements are made to close offices to the public. For the majority of OPM's announcements, it is expected that telework will provide an option so that eligible telework-ready employees may avoid a lengthy commute or having to use their leave. For employees who are expected to telework when Federal offices are closed to the public, it is imperative that they have the opportunity to telework on a regular basis to ensure functionality.
6. Agencies must notify employees that if they are required to report for work and fail to do so, they will be charged absence without leave (AWOL) for the period not worked and may potentially be disciplined for AWOL at the agency's discretion. (See [Failure to Report for Work](#).) In unique situations, an agency may determine that circumstances justify excusing an *emergency employee* or non-emergency employee

from duty, and he or she may be granted excused absence.

7. Agencies are responsible for determining dismissal, emergency procedures, and leave policies for employees on shift work and alternative work schedules (i.e., flexible or compressed work schedules) and for informing employees of these policies. Agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>

## V. Additional Resources for Emergency Guidance

In any emergency situation, Government operations may be disrupted for extended periods. OPM has provided numerous resources to enable Federal agencies to continue functioning effectively during an emergency situation. This information is available at <http://www.opm.gov/emergency>. In addition, the following fact sheets and *Handbook*, available on OPM's website, offer further guidance on continuing operations during extended emergencies:

**Handbook on Pay and Leave Benefits for Federal Employees Affected by Severe Weather Emergencies or Other Emergency Situations**

[http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2008/HandbookForEmergencies\(PayAndLeave\).pdf](http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2008/HandbookForEmergencies(PayAndLeave).pdf)

**Emergency Situations That Prevent Employees from Reporting for Work**

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/PreventEmpsReportingforWork.asp>

**Emergency Situations That Restrict Employees to Their Agency's Premises ("Shelter in Place")**

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/ShelterInPlace.asp>

**Furloughs Due to Extended Emergencies**

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/Furloughs.asp>

## Appendix: OPM Announcements on the Status of Federal Government Operations in the Washington, DC, Area

<b>STATUS OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS WASHINGTON, DC, AREA</b>	
The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provides the following announcements to the media when a disruption occurs before or during the workday in the Washington, DC, area.	
<b>Announcement</b>	<b>What Announcement Means</b>
<b>1. OPEN</b>	<p>“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are <b>OPEN.</b>”</p> <p>Employees are expected to report to their worksite or begin telework on time. Normal operating procedures are in effect.</p> <p>Employees account for their hours of work by <b>WATS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working at a worksite in the DC area,</li> <li>• Alternative work schedules (AWS) day off,</li> <li>• Teleworking (at home or at a telework center), or</li> <li>• Scheduled leave or other paid time off.</li> </ul>
<b>2. OPEN WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK</b>	<p>“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are <b>OPEN</b> and employees have the <b>OPTION</b> for <b>UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.</b>”</p> <p>Employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take unscheduled leave; or</li> <li>• perform unscheduled telework as defined in the employee’s individual telework agreement, and as permitted by their agency’s policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements.</li> </ul> <p>Employees <i>scheduled to telework on the day of the announcement</i> are expected to begin telework on time or request unscheduled leave.</p> <p><i>Emergency employees</i> are expected to report to their worksite on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.</p>

**3. OPEN – XX HOUR  
DELAYED ARRIVAL -- WITH  
OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED  
LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED  
TELEWORK**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** under **XX HOUR DELAYED ARRIVAL** and employees have the **OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK**. Employees should plan to arrive for work no more than xx hours later than they would normally arrive.”

Non-emergency employees, who report to the office, will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for up to the designated number of hours past their normal arrival time.

Employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to:

- take unscheduled leave; or
- perform unscheduled telework as defined in the employee’s individual telework agreement, and as permitted by their agency’s policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements.

Employees *scheduled to telework on the day of the announcement* are expected to begin telework on time or request unscheduled leave.

*Emergency employees* are expected to report to their worksite on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

**4. OPEN - XX HOUR EARLY DEPARTURE**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees should depart **XX HOURS** earlier than their normal departure time from work.”

Non-emergency employees will be dismissed relative to their normal departure times from their office and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday beyond their designated early departure time.

With supervisory approval, a telework-ready employee may depart prior to the scheduled early departure time without charge to annual leave provided the employee makes up the time later in the day by teleworking, as permitted by his or her agency’s policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements,.

Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who were granted unscheduled leave for the entire workday should be charged leave for the entire day.

*Telework employees* are expected to follow their agency’s policy and continue working if so stated in the policy or telework agreement.

*Emergency employees* are expected to continue working.

**5. FEDERAL OFFICES ARE  
CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC**

**“FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area  
are **CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.**”

*Emergency employees* are expected to report for work on time.

Non-emergency employees (including employees on pre-approved paid leave) will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours they were scheduled to work unless:

- the employee is required to telework,
- the employee works or is on official travel outside of the Washington, DC, area,
- the employee is on leave without pay, or
- the employee is on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off.