



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Tuesday, December 16, 2014
CPM 2014-16

**MEMORANDUM FOR: AGENCY HEADS MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL AND CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICERS**

FROM: Katherine Archuleta Director

Subject: Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

As the 2014-2015 winter season approaches, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has updated the dismissal and emergency procedures for the Washington, DC area, in the Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures (Procedures). These procedures are based on the principle that the Federal government's vital business must continue without compromising the safety of our employees and the general public. Although the procedures are typically issued in winter, the announcements are applicable for any emergency or special event that causes a disruption inside the "Washington Capital Beltway."

During the past few years, OPM has consulted with an interagency working group of human resources specialists, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), and national labor organizations to ensure that our procedures reflect the needs of the human resources community. OPM has also coordinated with Federal, State, and local emergency management and transportation officials to ensure that each announcement supports the needs of the emergency situation.

Communicating Expectations

Federal agencies and employees in the Washington, DC, area should be prepared to respond immediately to an emergency situation. OPM's operating status announcements are only effective if each employee understands what the announcement means and how to react. Every OPM announcement should be accompanied by specific agency procedures, as reflected in employee telework agreements, and/or collective bargaining agreements, as consistent with law. These agency procedures will allow employees to know what is expected of them during an OPM operating status announcement.

It is paramount that agencies communicate expectations to their employees in written policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining responsibilities, as consistent with law. Expectations must be made clear in continuity or operations plans, as well as in written telework agreements, in compliance with the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. Employees must understand which human resources flexibilities are available to them during specific agency operating procedures, such as unscheduled telework, unscheduled leave, leave without pay, alternative work schedule day off, etc. In an emergency situation, timing is crucial. Employees must be able to act under their own agency's procedures when unscheduled telework

or unscheduled leave are options, or when provisions in agency telework agreements requiring employees to telework when the Federal Government is closed have been triggered.

Importance of Following OPM Announcements

In order to enhance safety and productivity, it is essential that covered Federal agencies and employees follow the procedures for Governmentwide emergencies or special events that create a disruption in the Washington metropolitan area. The operating status announcements are intended to apply to employees working in all Executive agencies with offices located inside the “Washington Capital Beltway.” In the event of an area-wide work disruption, agencies should avoid taking independent action because changes in the commuting hours of Federal employees can result in dramatic disruption of the highway and mass transit systems. Following OPM’s operating status announcements and policies will allow for coordination with municipal and regional officials, and will reduce disruption of the highway and transit systems. This will both reduce traffic congestion and ensure that affected employees are treated as consistently as possible.

Migrating Toward Uniform Telework Policies and Procedures

Unscheduled telework has become a standard human resources tool in the procedures. It is a product of the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, which requires that all agencies incorporate telework into their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP). To support continuity of operations on any day when Federal offices are closed, OPM’s goal is to maximize the use of telework for both essential and nonessential functions.

Employees on Pre-Approved Paid Leave When Federal Offices Are Closed

This year, OPM is making one change to an outdated leave practice associated with not charging pre-approved paid leave on a day when Federal offices are closed. In the past, when Federal offices were closed, most agency operations were shut down, and the Federal closure day was considered a non-workday for affected employees. On a non-workday, the employee’s pre-approved leave was cancelled and the employees would have received excused absence, since the office closure was viewed as preventing the employee from working. As agencies have established their telework policies and incorporated them into their continuity of operation plans, and as more employees have continued to work when Federal offices are closed, the justification for providing excused absence to employees on pre-approved paid leave has become obsolete, since agency operations continue, to a substantial degree, even when Federal offices (i.e., buildings/facilities) are closed. As a result, OPM’s Federal closure announcement procedures will no longer advise agencies to cancel an employee’s pre-approved paid leave and automatically grant the employee excused absence on a day when Federal offices are closed.

For More Information

Announcements on the status of Government operations in the Washington, DC, area will be available at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/current-status>. Recorded messages on operating status also will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison on (202) 606-1900. Additionally, the OPM Alert mobile app allows employees to instantly view the current and active operating status and to sign up for optional push notifications when status changes occur. Please visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/mobile-app> for more information.

Employees should contact their agency human resources office for further information on the implementation of the procedures. For general information on Federal pay, leave, and work scheduling policies, please visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave>. Agency field offices should contact their appropriate headquarters-level agency human resources office. Agency headquarters-level human resources offices may contact Pay and Leave at OPM at pay-leave-policy@opm.gov. Requests from individual employees will be returned or forwarded to the appropriate agency human resources office.

Link to Guidance: [Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures](#)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers
Human Resources Directors