



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Tuesday, November 27, 2012
CPM 2012-11

MEMORANDUM FOR: Heads Of Executive Departments And Agencies

FROM: John Berry Director

Subject: Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

As the 2012-2013 winter season approaches, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is providing Federal agencies and employees with an updated version of the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures (Procedures)*. Our recent experiences with Hurricane Sandy reinforced the importance of being prepared and knowing what to do. It is imperative that agencies continue to develop and communicate their policies associated with the Procedures to ensure the best use of all available human resources tools.

OPM consulted with an inter-agency working group of agency human resources specialists, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), and national labor organizations to update the *Procedures*. We also coordinated with Federal, State, and local emergency management and transportation officials.

Communicating Expectations

OPM's operating status announcements cannot work unless each employee understands what the announcement means and how to react. Agencies must redouble their efforts to communicate expectations to their employees and supervisors in written policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining responsibilities. Expectations must be crystal clear in continuity or operations plans and written telework agreements, in compliance with the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. As needed, agencies should update their internal policies and clarify the human resources flexibilities that are available to employees during specific agency operating procedures—e.g., unscheduled telework, unscheduled leave, leave without pay, alternative work schedule day off. In an emergency situation, timing is very important. Employees must understand and be able to act immediately under their own agency's procedures when unscheduled telework or unscheduled leave are options, or when employees are required to telework when the Federal Government is closed.

Migrating Toward Uniform Telework Policies and Procedures

For decades, certain Federal employees have been expected to work during emergencies to provide continuity of Government functions. OPM introduced unscheduled telework in 2010 after the "snowmageddon" episodes to provide improved continuity during emergencies by having as many Federal employees as possible ready to telework so they can continue the work

on which our Nation depends. Generally, telework provides employees with flexibility to balance work and personal needs. Telework is a means to keep employees safe during weather emergencies and help reduce traffic congestion. Telework is also a powerful tool to provide agencies with the resources they need to accomplish their missions during emergencies. Telework is voluntary, but a written agreement which outlines expectations is required before an employee can participate in telework. In the case of unscheduled telework, continuity of operations are supported and enhanced significantly when employees with telework agreements continue the work of the Federal Government.

Unscheduled telework is now 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). While increased use of unscheduled telework has enhanced our COOP capabilities during severe weather, special events and other emergency situations, it is now time to expand telework to allow a greater number of telework-ready employees to be productive during Government closures in order to meet the Act's objectives.

When Federal offices are closed, OPM's operating status announcement requires that two types of telework-ready employees will perform work: (1) employees already scheduled to perform telework on the effective day of the announcement and (2) employees required to perform telework according to their written telework agreement when the Federal Government is closed. However, there is a third category of teleworkers – (3) those who are telework-ready but are neither scheduled to work on the day of an OPM closure announcement or required to work on that day according to their written telework agreements. Currently, group (3) may be the largest category of telework employees. OPM urges that agencies migrate towards a more comprehensive telework policy by incorporating group (3) employees into group (2) (i.e., employees required to perform telework when the Federal Government is closed). Note that written telework agreements, consistent with agency policies and subject to any collective bargaining agreements, must be in place before requiring telework for both (1) and (2).

New OPM Operating Status Announcement to Improve Emergency Tool Kit

OPM is incorporating a new delayed arrival announcement to provide for a common departure time from home and a common opening time for public access to Federal offices. This announcement is an expansion of our existing delayed arrival announcement, and we anticipate it will be used when icy conditions exist before the workday has begun but a rapid warm-up is forecasted after dawn.

Revised Closure Announcement

OPM is also amending the operating status announcement used for Federal office closures to make it clear that while Federal offices are indeed closed during this announcement, continuity of Government endures and many employees will continue to work. The revised announcement is "Federal Offices Are Closed - Emergency and Telework-Ready Employees Must Follow Their Agency's Policies."

Importance of Following Announcements

It is essential that covered Federal agencies and employees comply with The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*. These policies are based on the principle that the Federal Government's vital business must be carried out without compromising the safety of our employees and the general public. Agencies possess the authority to release employees and/or close individual facilities to the public on a localized, building-by-building basis, and agencies should exercise this authority during localized emergencies such as a building fire or limited flooding. However, in the event of area-wide work disruptions, agencies should avoid 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 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.

For More Information

Announcements on the status of Government operations will be available at <http://www.opm.gov/status/index.aspx>. Recorded messages on operating status also will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison on (202) 606-1900.

For general 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 office for further information on the implementation of the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*. 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.

Attachment:

[*Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*](#)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers, and Human Resources Directors