



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Wednesday, December 16, 2015
CPM 2015-13

MEMORANDUM FOR: HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: BETH F. COBERT, ACTING DIRECTOR

Subject: Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

As we begin the 2015-2016 winter season, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) wants to take this opportunity to remind Federal departments and agencies of the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures (Procedures)* guide. These *procedures* reflect 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 significant 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. This year OPM is not recommending changes to the *procedures* or the operating status announcements, but we would still like to highlight a couple of important topics for both agencies and employees.

Telework Policies and Procedures

Telework has become a standard human resources tool in the *procedures* that enables a greater number of Federal employees to work during emergency situations. Agencies should continue to incorporate telework arrangements into their agency emergency planning so that employees will be able to telework during emergency situations allowing the Federal government to maintain productivity and ensure continuity of operations. Given recent agency actions to improve cybersecurity practices, we strongly encourage agencies to take steps to ensure that telework-ready employees are prepared to effectively telework and access agency IT systems and networks, as may be necessary, should an emergency or weather condition so warrant.

Communicating Expectations

Federal agencies and employees in the Washington, DC, area must 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 in continuity of

operations plans, written telework agreements, and/or collective bargaining agreements, as consistent with law. These agency procedures will allow employees to know what is expected of them when OPM changes the operating status. 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 Operating Status 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.

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