

Wednesday, November 30, 2011  
CPM 2011-20

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Heads Of Executive Departments And Agencies**

FROM: John Berry, Director

Subject: Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

Since the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued last year's update to the Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures in December 2010, we have seen a series of unusual emergencies: a high-impact, late afternoon snowstorm; a 5.8 magnitude earthquake; and tropical winds and flooding from the aftermath of a hurricane. Experience with these severe, unpredictable and unusual weather conditions prompted comments and concerns from both the Federal and private sectors. As a result, OPM has reviewed and refined our guidance to more effectively manage traffic congestion, while ensuring the safety of our employees and the general public.

In partnership with the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, OPM formed a working group of agency human resources specialists. We coordinated with Federal, State, and local emergency management and transportation officials to develop new announcements and policies. We hope the new operating announcements and other changes will help provide tools to both keep employees safe and keep the Federal Government functioning.

**Agency-Specific Emergencies**

For agency-specific emergencies, OPM continues to believe that each agency is in the best position to determine the appropriate course of action. For example, power outages or flooding in a particular building could affect one or several facilities without requiring all agencies to take action. Agencies have the authority to release employees and/or close individual facilities to the public on a localized, building-by-building basis. Each agency should have a method for communicating and updating operating status announcements to employees as part of the agency's emergency procedures.

**Employees Need Empowerment to Act**

As part of the overall communication process for Governmentwide operating procedures, agencies should empower employees to follow OPM's operating status announcements. It is important that employees are comfortable with the operating procedures and announcements in order to respond quickly without the need for permission. Agencies must develop policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, and where applicable, as defined in written telework agreements.

Agencies should inform and remind their employees now about the updated [Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures](#). In an emergency situation, timing is very important. Employees should follow OPM announcements and any additional agency-specific procedures when an emergency occurs. Employees must follow their own agency's procedures for notifying supervisors or other agency officials when unscheduled telework or unscheduled leave are options.

### **Continued Migration to Telework**

OPM strongly encourages agencies to continue reviewing their current telework arrangements and to establish new telework agreements with all employees who are (1) scheduled to telework or (2) participate in telework on an occasional or ad hoc basis and thus have the potential to telework (e.g., by engaging in unscheduled telework) at any time during the year. Telework strongly enhances continuity during severe weather conditions and emergency situations, but only if we begin telework practices before the emergency occurs. Based on positive feedback from agencies and employees, we expect to have even more of the Federal workforce working during periods when unscheduled telework is announced in the future.

### **New OPM Operating Status Announcements to Improve Emergency Tool Kit**

Learning from the past year's widely varied events, we have focused on developing additional announcements to better reflect unexpected emergency situations. A 5.8 magnitude earthquake is different from a snowstorm at night or a snowstorm in the middle of the workday. Each must be handled differently. After coordinating with our stakeholders, OPM is adding three new announcements to its emergency tool kit which includes a staggered early departure with final departure time, immediate departure, and shelter-in-place. OPM believes that these additional announcements will complement the existing emergency response tools. Please see the Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures at <https://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf> for the details and accompanying OPM policies and guidance.

### **Strategic Use of OPM Operating Status Announcements**

OPM's ultimate goal is to maintain continuity of operations while ensuring the safety of Federal employees and the general public. To achieve this goal, OPM is committed to making operating status decisions as far in advance as feasible and strategically using these announcements to reduce uncertainty and minimize demands on transportation infrastructure.

### **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](mailto: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](#)

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cc: Chief Human Capital Officers

Human Resources Directors