



National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

<http://www.nih.gov>

November 24, 2008

TO: All NIH Employees

FROM: Chief, Benefits and Payroll Liaison Branch

SUBJECT: Closure of NIH Facilities

The following provides emergency closure or dismissal procedures for NIH employees in the Washington, D.C. area (including employees telecommuting from an alternative worksite) in the event of inclement weather or other emergency conditions. Information regarding reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities is also provided.

If a weather-related or other emergency arises before the workday begins, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will provide an announcement to the media as early as possible regarding the operating status of the Federal Government. As soon as the status is determined, it will also be posted on OPM's web site at <http://www.opm.gov/> and a recorded message will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications on 202-606-1900.

The announcements which will be used by OPM are: (a) Federal agencies are OPEN; (b) Federal agencies are open and operating under an UNSCHEDULED LEAVE policy; (c) Federal agencies are open and operating under a DELAYED ARRIVAL policy; (d) Federal agencies are open and operating under a DELAYED ARRIVAL/UNSCHEDULED LEAVE policy; and (e) Federal agencies are CLOSED. A list of these announcements and their meanings is provided as [Attachment A](#). Employees are responsible for checking their local radio and television stations for one of the media announcements and/or contacting OPM via their web site or telephone number.

If during the workday severe weather conditions or other emergencies arise, OPM may authorize an early dismissal policy and the release of employees will be guided by their normal departure from work. Employees, as in the past, are **not** to rely on media announcements for early dismissal. If it becomes necessary to dismiss employees during the workday, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) will notify you of the decision as soon as possible.

Emergency employees are not affected by the above procedures. They are expected to report to work on time in the event of an unscheduled leave, delayed arrival or closure announcement. If emergency employees are already at work when notification of an early dismissal is received, they are to remain at work through the end of their tour. Employees are designated as emergency employees if they provide services that are vital

to public health, safety, or welfare; national defense; or the operation of essential facilities. These employees receive annual notification of their emergency status. In the event of an emergency dismissal or shutdown, teleworking employees may be required to continue to work at their alternative worksites. This expectation must be spelled out in the telework agreement, so that all parties know their responsibilities in advance. <http://www1.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters/person/2300-600-1>

OPM assures us that they encourage and will follow a policy of allowing more general use of unscheduled leave so that employees who truly find it impossible or unsafe to make it to work or who arrive late can use annual leave, previously earned compensatory time or credit hours, or leave without pay, while the essential functions of the Government continue with the employees who are able to make it to work. However, on those days that OPM does not declare an unscheduled leave policy because conditions generally are not bad, supervisors are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that localized weather and road conditions may preclude some employees from safely commuting to work and to grant unscheduled annual leave, available compensatory time or credit hours, or leave without pay to such workers. Additionally, if it is announced that the Federal Government is open but some employees are unavoidably delayed in arriving for work, supervisors may grant a reasonable amount (based on distance, mode, and availability of transportation, and success of other employees in similar situations) of excused absence.

OPM has issued a more complete guide to the Washington, DC, area dismissal or closure procedures, which is available at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>.

If you have questions regarding the above, please contact your Administrative Officer or supervisor.

Reasonable accommodation should also be provided during inclement weather and other emergencies for employees with disabilities. Each IC should work with its employees to establish new agreements or reevaluate existing agreements. Those agreements must include the following:

1. Name of the organization;
2. Name of the employee;
3. Name of the supervisor;
4. Name of the disability or medical condition;
5. Employee's assessment of impact of weather or other emergency;
6. Identification of accommodation; and
7. Certification of discussion and agreement of accommodation by dated signature of both the employee and supervisor.

Further guidance regarding reasonable accommodation as it relates to inclement weather is provided as [***Attachment B***](#). Any questions regarding reasonable accommodation should be directed to Sheila Monroe on (301) 402-0379 or via e-mail at monroes@od.nih.gov.

/s/
Tricia M. Strittmatter

[**Attachment A – Emergencies Before the Workday Begins**](#)

[**Attachment B – Further Guidance Regarding Reasonable Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities**](#)