

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

November 2012

a New Day for the Federal Service

A Message from the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management

To help prepare for the 2012-2013 winter season, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is updating the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*. This year we are incorporating an announcement for a common delayed departure time for commuting and a delayed opening time of Federal offices based on one of our 2011-2012 winter experiences. For better communication of Governmentwide operations, we are also changing our announcement “Federal Offices are Closed to the Public” to “Federal Offices are Closed – Emergency and Telework-Ready Employees Must Follow Their Agency’s Policies.” OPM recognizes that it is very difficult to have a complete list of operating status announcements to fit every emergency situation or special event. In order to ensure the safety of our employees and the general public, and to promote continuity of operations, OPM will continue to consider the circumstances surrounding every weather emergency or special event and adjust operating status announcements accordingly.

Based on our experience with Hurricane Sandy, we know how important it is for agencies to continue to develop and communicate their policies associated with the published OPM operating status announcements to ensure successful implementation of the available human resources tools – e.g., unscheduled telework, flexible working hours (including adjustments of days off under flexible work schedules), and unscheduled leave.

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, flexible 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 agreements 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 nor required to work on that day according to their written telework agreement. 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 Federal offices. This announcement is an expansion of our existing delayed arrival announcements, 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

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* are available at <https://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>. It is essential that covered Federal agencies and employees comply with OPM's 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 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.

Thank you for your cooperation. Together, we will keep our workers safe and continue to conduct the business of the American people.

John Berry
Director

Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction	1
II. Changes in OPM’s Operating Procedures	4
III. Communicating Expectations	7
IV. OPM Guidance on Dismissal and Closure Procedures	13
V. OPM and Agency Responsibilities	23
VI. Additional Resources for Emergency Guidance	26
Appendix: OPM Announcements on the Status of Federal Government Operations in the Washington, DC, Area	27

I. Introduction

The following procedures apply to situations that prevent significant numbers of Federal employees who work inside the Washington Capital Beltway (referred to as the Washington, DC, area, for purposes of these procedures) from reporting to the office on time or remaining at the office for the full workday and for situations which require Federal offices to close, including emergencies, severe weather conditions, natural disasters, and other incidents causing disruptions of Government operations. For continuity of operations, it is important for certain Federal Government operations to continue to function, even when offices are closed.

A. Geographic Area of Application of Emergency Procedures

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* apply to employees in all Executive agencies with offices located inside the “Washington Capital Beltway” (the highway that circles the Nation’s capital). In addition, some agencies may determine to apply these same procedures to facilities located in the portions of the Counties and jurisdictions that are outside of the Capital Beltway but adjacent to the District of Columbia (i.e., Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties; and the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church in Virginia). However, other agencies may determine to develop separate plans for these facilities, since Federal offices in areas outside the Capital Beltway may be subject to different weather and traffic conditions than those inside the Beltway. In very rare circumstances, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may issue guidelines affecting agency facilities outside the Washington Capital Beltway. Note, however, that OPM’s procedures do not apply to employees of the legislative branch, judicial branch, U.S. Postal Service, the government of the District of Columbia, or private sector entities, including contractors.

For weather-related situations in certain large metropolitan areas outside of the Washington, DC, area, the Federal Executive Boards provide up-to-date, accurate, and consistent information, such as from the National Weather Service, to their local Federal agency leaders to assist them in making informed decisions on the appropriate operating status for their Federal agency employees in those areas. Each local Federal agency head makes workforce status decisions for his or her agency employees and should report that workforce status decision to his or her agency Headquarters. While the operating status of the Federal Government in the Washington, DC, area can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/status/index.aspx>, Federal employees in geographic areas outside of the Washington, DC, area should check with their own agency regarding the operating status of their duty station.

B. Importance of Following OPM Announcements for Washington, DC, Area Emergencies

It is essential that covered Federal agencies and employees comply with the area-wide plan and OPM announcements concerning dismissal or closure of Federal offices in the Washington, DC, area. OPM consults with Federal agencies, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and others for these dismissal policies. 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 on a localized, building-by-building basis (e.g., a building fire or local flood). Agencies should avoid independent action in the event of area-wide work disruptions, however, because any change in the commuting hours of Federal employees must be coordinated carefully with municipal and regional officials in order to minimize disruption of the highway and mass transit systems. Following OPM's announcements and policies will reduce disruption of the highway and transit systems, reduce traffic congestion, and ensure that affected employees are treated as consistently as possible.

Agencies should inform and remind their employees at least annually about the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*. In an emergency situation, timing is very important. Employees should follow OPM operating status 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.

C. Importance of Telework during Dismissal or Closure

The Federal Government uses telework as a means to allow Federal employees to complete their work at an approved alternative worksite. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (the Act) defines "telework" or "teleworking" as a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of his or her position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work. Agencies should incorporate telework arrangements into their agency emergency planning so that employees who would prefer to telework in the event of such an emergency, and who could perform duties from an alternate location, may do so.

Telework continues to allow a greater number of Federal employees to work during emergency situations. Recognizing our evolving use of technology, telework allows the Federal Government to maximize operational efficiency to the extent practicable without compromising the safety of our employees and the general public during heavy snow accumulation, significant road closures due to various events, and other emergency situations. In emergencies, OPM will make announcements to the public and the media on the status of operations for Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area. Sections III and IV of this Handbook provide additional guidance on the use of telework for dismissal and closure procedures.

Emergency Planning

The Act requires all agencies to incorporate telework arrangements into their Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans. In preparation for COOP emergencies, agencies should have telework policies and agreements in place that encourage employees to participate in telework, more generally, and provide employees who participate in telework with instructions, procedures, and expectations in the event they need to respond to a COOP event. Agencies should ensure that the equipment, technology, and technical support

have been tested; that employees are comfortable with technology and communications methods; and that supervisors and managers are comfortable managing a dispersed workgroup.

Requirement for Written Telework Agreement

The Act requires a written telework agreement and the successful completion of interactive telework training for any employee entering into a telework agreement. The Act also calls for the provision of interactive telework training for all managers of teleworkers. A telework employee and his or her supervisor should enter into a written agreement for every type of telework, whether the employee teleworks regularly or not. The written telework agreement should include expectations for the employee when teleworking and should address whether the employee may perform unscheduled telework and whether the employee is required to work when Federal offices are closed.

The agreement provides the framework for the discussion that needs to take place between the supervisor and the employee about work expectations and operational procedures. The parameters of telework agreements are laid out by the agency policy and/or collective bargaining agreement and typically address the days and times the employee is regularly scheduled to telework or permitted to telework on an intermittent or situational (ad hoc) basis, as applicable. In addition, agencies must provide interactive training to ensure that employees and supervisors have the skills to engage effectively in telework.

No Coercion

Employee participation in the telework program is voluntary. An agency may not compel an employee to participate in telework, even if the duties of the position make that employee “telework eligible.” Therefore, an agency should never force an employee (who either does not wish to telework or is not eligible to telework) to sign a telework agreement to avoid providing excused absence to that employee on a day when Federal offices are closed.

Ensure Employees Are Telework-Ready

OPM strongly encourages agencies to continue reviewing their current telework arrangements and establish written agreements with all employees who are scheduled or eligible to telework (i.e., telework-ready) at any time during the year. Special attention should be paid to employees who will telework only on an occasional, situational (ad hoc) basis so that they are prepared to telework during events or circumstances that disrupt or prevent commuting or reporting to the office. The key to the successful use of situational (ad hoc) telework is an effective, routine telework program. Snow emergencies, for example, may be rare events, but to operate as intended, telework-ready employees should regularly practice teleworking.

Communication of Expectations for Unscheduled Telework

Agency telework policies and telework agreements should specify whether employees are expected or permitted to work from home during emergency situations on days that they

are not regularly scheduled to telework. OPM strongly encourages agencies to permit telework-ready employees to use unscheduled telework on any day OPM makes an unscheduled telework announcement. With regard to unscheduled telework, the written telework agreement should specifically address telework expectations when the Federal Government announces (1) unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework or (2) delayed arrival. In addition, employees who are already performing unscheduled telework should know that they are expected to complete their normal workday when OPM announces an early or immediate departure after the workday has begun.

Agencies should avoid creating unnecessary barriers for telework-ready employees when unscheduled telework is announced. Since the unscheduled telework option maintains productivity and continuity of operations, OPM strongly believes the best course of action is for agencies to be as accommodating as possible to telework-ready employees who wish to perform unscheduled telework.

Finally, agencies should remind employees who elect to perform unscheduled telework that they must have an appropriate amount of work to complete during the workday at home. If an employee does not have enough work, he or she must either take unscheduled leave for the entire workday or use a combination of unscheduled leave and unscheduled telework to account for hours not worked.

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 written 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 agreements 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 agreement. 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).

To ensure for the continued migration of group (3), agencies must develop new telework policies (if not already in place). Agencies can begin by reviewing their current policies and procedures to determine if unscheduled telework has been operating as intended and make any needed corrections. Then, individual written telework agreements must be implemented to reflect the new telework policies. The goal is to have full use of telework-ready employees, for both essential and nonessential functions, to support continuity of operations on any day when Federal offices are closed. Agencies and employees must remember that telework is voluntary. While telework is a critical human resources tool when Federal offices are closed, it is also a valuable work-life flexibility used by employees throughout the year, helping to balance work and personal needs.

It is important to note that Federal offices will be closed when it is unsafe for employees to commute; however, employees who can telework in the safety of their own homes generally should no longer be granted excused absence. The long-term focus should remain on telework-employees having the ability to work from home year-round and not on the narrow issue of who receives excused absence during a closure. Agencies should consider exercising their authority to grant excused absence to teleworking employees on a case-by-case basis when it is not possible to telework for some or all of the workday (e.g., power outages or network connection problems that prevent telework) when Federal offices are closed.

Communication of Expectations for Telework-Ready Employees When Federal Offices Are Closed

Agencies telework policies and telework agreements must also specify whether employees are required to work from home when OPM issues an operating announcement saying that Federal offices are closed. OPM encourages agencies to require telework-ready employees who are permitted to use unscheduled telework to be required to telework on closure days. This includes employees who are regularly scheduled to telework on the day of a closure and those who were not scheduled in advance to telework but are required to do so by virtue of their telework agreement.

To be able to telework effectively on a day when the Federal Government closes, employees must be able to practice—either performing telework on a day when an operating announcement is made for unscheduled telework, periodically throughout the year (e.g., at least once a month), or on a regular basis (e.g., once a week or more). A telework employee must be able to practice telework to be effective when OPM issues a Federal closure announcement.

If an employee is required to telework on a day when the Federal Government is closed and the employee's telework site is impacted by the emergency, agencies may exercise their authority to grant excused absence to that affected employee. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis (e.g., when power outages or network connection problems prevent telework). On closure days, agencies should exercise situational awareness, understanding that the employee's telework location may also be impacted by the emergency situation. Thus, it may be appropriate to provide excused absence for a part or all of the day.

D. Strategic Use of OPM Operating Status Announcements

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

E. Agency-Specific Announcements

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 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.

II. Changes in OPM's Operating Procedures

In response to questions, comments, and concerns, OPM is altering its operating status announcements and guidance to more effectively assist agencies and employees during severe weather and other emergency situations. As part of our effort to involve our stakeholders in the process, OPM consulted with a working group of agency human resources specialists, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), and national labor organizations. We also coordinated with Federal, State, and local emergency management and transportation officials. The following summarizes the recommendations of the stakeholders regarding OPM's operating procedures.

A. New Delayed Arrival Announcement

OPM is adding a new delayed arrival announcement. The expansion of the delayed arrival announcements more accurately reflects the types of emergency situations that may take place before the workday has begun. This new delayed arrival announcement will be used depending on the specific circumstances surrounding the emergency, and it is intended to make the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* a more comprehensive emergency guide.

OPM Announcement: “Open – Delayed Arrival – Employees Should Remain Off the Roads Until XX:XX. Federal Offices Will Open at YY:YY. Employees Have the Option for Unscheduled Leave or Unscheduled Telework”

Previously, OPM had only one delayed arrival announcement (i.e., staggered early departure from home, which allowed employees to arrive at the office XX hours later than they normally would have arrived). This year, OPM is adding a second announcement for certain emergency situations when, for the safety of employees, employees should not begin their commutes until after the designated time. As part of this announcement, OPM will also announce a designated time at which Federal offices will open. All non-emergency employees who commute to their offices on that day are expected to arrive by the designated time and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) up until that designated time. Any employee arriving after Federal offices open (i.e., the designated opening time) will be charged leave, beginning after the designated opening time.

On a case-by-case basis, agencies may provide excused absence to an employee who arrives after the common opening time due to a personal hardship. For example, an ice storm hits the Washington, DC, area overnight, before sunrise. The National Weather Service informs OPM that a rapid warm-up will occur after sunrise and the ice on the roads will melt soon thereafter. OPM is advised that travel will be safe by 9:00 a.m. In these circumstances, OPM would likely issue the new announcement informing employees to remain off the roads until a designated time (e.g., 9:00 a.m.) and that Federal offices will open at a designated time (e.g., 11:00 a.m.). Consequently, employees should plan their commute to arrive at work by no later than 11:00 a.m. Those arriving after 11:00 a.m. will be charged leave from 11:00 a.m. until the time of arrival at the office unless the agency determines that a personal hardship exists.

B. New Wording of OPM’s Federal Office Closure Announcement

Following Hurricane Sandy, OPM received many questions about the meaning of the operating status announcement: “Federal Offices are Closed to the Public.” After careful consideration, OPM has amended the operating status announcement to make it clear that while Federal offices are indeed closed during this announcement, the Government continues to operate and many categories of employees, including telework-ready employees, will be required to work.

OPM Announcement: “Federal Offices Are Closed – Emergency and Telework-Ready Employees Must Follow Their Agency’s Policies”

This revised announcement will be used when severe weather conditions or other emergencies warrant Federal office closures. The revised announcement communicates that while Federal offices are closed, many Federal employees will telework from home as we migrate to greater use of telework for continuity of Government operations. Each employee should know whether he or she is expected to work and should have a written telework agreement in place if telework is required. For example, when a severe storm strikes the Washington, DC, area and OPM issues the revised closure announcement, many telework-ready employees will be required to telework on the effective day of the announcement under their agency’s telework policies and as required by their written

telework agreements. Agencies and employees must communicate effectively so that all parties know what is expected when this announcement is made.

C. OPM Reserves the Right To Issue Additional Operating Status Announcements

During the past few years, the Washington, DC, area has experienced a wide variety of weather phenomena including historic amounts of snowfall in 2009 and 2010, ice storms, an earthquake, and a hurricane. These events have shown us that no two emergencies are exactly alike and that OPM's operating status announcements may not always fit a particular emergency. Therefore, as a general principle, OPM reserves the right to issue a new or hybrid operating status announcement at any time, depending on the particulars of the emergency, for the safety of employees and continuity of Government operations. OPM will always attempt to use the published operating status announcements.

III. Communicating Expectations

Each agency must clearly communicate expectations to supervisors and employees in preparation for days on which OPM announces a change in the operating status for the Federal Government in the Washington, DC area. It is important that each employee understand what an OPM operating status announcement means and how to react. This requires agencies to update their internal policies, including COOP plans and telework agreements, to reflect employee requirements under emergency operating procedures as required by the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010.

The agency must also provide guidance on human resources flexibilities that are available to employees during specific agency operating procedures—e.g., unscheduled telework, unscheduled leave, leave without pay, flexible 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.

A. Designation of an Emergency Employee

As the President's advisor on human resources policies, OPM advises agencies to designate in advance those emergency employees who are critical to agency operations (including security and infrastructure) in dismissal or closure situations and who will be expected to work. Because of the diversity in agency missions and employee occupations/skills, the variable nature of the emergencies, weather and geographic conditions specific to duty locations, and many other factors, OPM does not provide standard Governmentwide definitions of emergency employees. Each agency is in the best position and is responsible for determining its own needs. Agency heads (or their designees, as applicable) are responsible for making such determinations based on the agency's unique mission requirements and/or circumstances.

Emergency Employee

The designation of emergency employees may vary according to the particular nature of an exigency and may include any employees who are part of an agency's emergency response plans and COOP plans. Such designations should be communicated to the affected employees at least annually (preferably in writing and well in advance) so employees can be prepared to support and sustain agency operations.

Emergency employees are expected to report to or remain at their worksite in dismissal or closure situations unless otherwise directed by their agencies. In rare events, an agency may determine that circumstances justify granting excused absence to an emergency employee. An agency may grant a reasonable amount of excused absence to an emergency employee who is unable to report for work or faces a personal hardship. For example, factors such as distance, availability of public transportation, available alternatives to childcare or eldercare, or health/medical limitations may be considered. When Government operations are disrupted and offices are closed for an extended period of time, an agency may determine that changing circumstances require non-emergency employees to report for work. Consequently, each agency should establish a procedure for notifying and recalling these employees. OPM advises agencies to identify non-emergency employees who are expected to remain in contact with their agencies at all times during dismissal or closure situations to maintain continuity readiness. Such employees may be called to work during emergencies dealing with national security, extended emergencies, or other unique situations. Agencies should anticipate the emergency situations in which such employees will be expected to report for work at a regular worksite or alternative worksite and the circumstances under which they will be permitted to telework, if they prefer, and should notify affected employees of this policy. Agencies may issue communications devices and other equipment to these employees to facilitate contact in emergency situations.

Non-Emergency Employees

When OPM issues an operating status announcement that includes unscheduled telework/unscheduled leave, and Federal offices are otherwise open, OPM expects that non-emergency employees will be empowered to make their decisions and simply notify their agencies of their status for the day. This is the norm. However, OPM recognizes that in rare circumstances, an agency may find it necessary to require a non-emergency employee to report for an assignment that requires presence at the worksite (e.g., providing a presentation or performing administrative duties at a pre-scheduled conference). This should not be a last-minute surprise, but a special work circumstance that both the supervisor and employee know about, discuss, and plan in advance as the special work requirement evolves. This does not change the status of a non-emergency employee to an emergency employee, and would never require such an employee to report to work when Federal offices are closed, but recognizes that when the absence of an employee would have an adverse impact on a special, pre-planned event, and Federal offices remain open, the employee will make every effort possible to report to the worksite, as long as it is safe to do so. OPM strongly encourages agencies to communicate expectations explicitly to its employees through internal agency policies, instructions, notices, procedures, telework agreements and/or collective bargaining

agreements to avoid any confusion on a day when a change to the OPM operating status announcement is made.

B. Telework-Ready Employees

Telework is now a standard human resources tool in our *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 requires that all agencies incorporate telework into their COOP Plans. OPM advises agencies to make telework arrangements a standard part of all agency emergency planning to ensure the Federal Government is well positioned to carry out its essential functions for continuity of operations. Employees' telework agreements should spell out whether employees have either an option or are expected to work from home or an alternative site on days when the Federal Government has announced a change in the operating status for the Washington, DC, area.

OPM strongly encourages agencies to maintain a viable telework-ready workforce. This requires encouraging employees to enter into written telework agreements, communicating expectations before an emergency situation occurs, and practicing and testing equipment and procedures regularly throughout the year, not just teleworking during emergencies that may occur only infrequently over time (i.e., "blue moon" emergencies). Thus, all telework-ready employees should have the opportunity or be required to telework regularly to ensure that they will be able to function effectively and efficiently on a day when Federal offices are closed in the Washington, DC, area.

Unscheduled telework

OPM strongly encourages agencies to permit telework-ready employees to telework on any day OPM makes an announcement that includes an unscheduled telework announcement. As permitted by their agency's policies, procedures, and subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency telework-ready employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework, as appropriate.

Delayed Arrival

Agencies **may not** require employees to telework when OPM announces "Open with Option for Unscheduled Leave/Unscheduled Telework," "Open – XX hour(s) Delayed Arrival with Option for Unscheduled Leave/Unscheduled Telework," or "Open – Delayed Arrival – Employees Should Remain Off the Roads Until XX:XX. Federal Offices Will Open at YY:YY. Employees Have the Option for Unscheduled Leave or Telework." Telework should always be voluntary during these particular announcements and employees should be given the opportunity to perform unscheduled telework, take leave, use a combination of the two, or report to the official worksite. If an employee chooses to use unscheduled telework versus report to the workplace, the employee should work the entire day.

Early Departure

When OPM announces an early departure, employees who are already performing telework should continue teleworking the entire day. If the employee is impacted by the emergency, the employee may request appropriate leave, earned compensatory time off, or credit hours (if permitted), or may ask to reschedule his or her flexible work schedule day off when additional time off is needed. Agencies may consider exercising their authority to grant excused absence to teleworking employees on a case-by-case basis (e.g., for electricity/infrastructure/connectivity issues, childcare or eldercare issues).

Federal Office Closure

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 agreements 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 agreement. 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).

To ensure for the continued migration of group (3), agencies must develop new telework policies (if not already in place). Agencies can begin by reviewing their current policies and procedures to determine if unscheduled telework has been operating as intended and make any needed corrections. Then, individual written telework agreements must be implemented to reflect the new telework policies. The goal is to have full use of telework-ready employees, for both essential and nonessential functions, to support continuity of operations on any day when Federal offices are closed. Agencies and employees must remember that telework is voluntary. While telework is a critical human resources tool when Federal offices are closed, it is also a valuable work-life flexibility used by employees throughout the year, helping to balance work and personal needs.

It is important to note that Federal offices will be closed when it is unsafe for employees to commute; however, employees who can telework in the safety of their own homes generally should no longer be granted excused absence. The long-term focus should remain on telework-employees having the ability to work from home year-round and not on the narrow issue of who receives excused absence during a closure. Agencies should consider exercising their authority to grant excused absence to teleworking employees on a case-by-case basis when it is not possible to telework for some or all of the workday (e.g., power outages or network connection problems that prevent telework) when Federal offices are closed.

C. Appropriate Use of Leave Without Pay

Three of OPM's operating status announcements state that an employee may "use" leave without pay (LWOP) on a day when unscheduled leave is announced (i.e., "Open with Option for Unscheduled Leave or Unscheduled Telework;" "Open--XX Hours Delayed Arrival with Option for Unscheduled Leave or Unscheduled Telework;" and "Open--Delayed Arrival--Federal Employees Should Remain Off the Roads Until XX:XX. Federal Offices Will Open at YY:YY. Employees Have the Option For Unscheduled Leave or Unscheduled Telework").

LWOP is defined as a temporary nonpay status and absence from duty. LWOP must be requested by the employee and approved by the supervisor. OPM's procedures themselves do not create an automatic entitlement to use LWOP when the option for unscheduled leave is made available. It is the responsibility of each agency to manage LWOP, and in some circumstances, an agency may determine that it is inappropriate to approve LWOP. Except for these rare circumstances, OPM encourages agencies to permit the use of LWOP if an employee does not have available paid leave or other paid time off (e.g., earned compensatory time off) to his or her credit and is impacted by the emergency or event that generated the announcement for unscheduled leave.

The administration of leave is based on internal agency procedures, in compliance with any collective bargaining requirements, as applicable. Each agency is responsible to develop and administer its own internal policies on leave, including LWOP, and communicate those policies to its supervisors and employees.

OPM uses the following language in the Procedures and encourages agencies to develop and communicate any additional policies needed for the pre-approval of LWOP for the applicable OPM operating status announcements. Employees are well aware of their leave balances, and if a supervisor and employee have the conversation in advance, LWOP can be a useful flexibility alongside telework and adjustments to flexible work schedules (including AWS days off) when emergencies arise.

"Non-Emergency Employees. Non-emergency employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework (if telework-ready). In accordance with their agency's policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees have the option to use (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate; (2) leave without pay; (3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready)."

D. No Additional Pay or Paid Time Off for Employees Who Must Work

Employees who are required to work on site (e.g., at the office) or telework during their regular tour of duty on a day when Federal offices are closed (or when other employees are authorized a delayed arrival or an early departure) are not entitled to receive overtime pay, credit hours, or compensatory time off for performing work during their regularly scheduled non-overtime hours.

E. Failure to Work

An emergency employee is required to work on a day when Federal offices are closed (or when OPM has authorized a delayed arrival or an early or immediate departure), and for such an employee, the day is a workday and normal time and attendance rules apply. A telework-ready employee may be required to work (based on agency policies and individual telework agreements, which may be subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements) on a day when Federal offices are closed (or when employees working at the office receive either a delayed arrival or an early departure announcement), and for such an employee, the day is a workday and normal time and attendance rules apply.

However, in rare situations an agency may determine that circumstances justify granting excused absence to an emergency employee or a telework-ready employee (required to work based on agency policies and telework agreements, which may be subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements), and such an employee may be granted excused absence (administrative leave) by the agency. This could occur, for instance, if weather conditions make it impracticable or dangerous for an emergency employee to travel to the worksite, or if power outages or network connection problems prevent telework.

If an employee who is required to work fails to report for work without adequate reason for his or her absence, the agency may place the employee on absence without leave (AWOL), and the employee may potentially be disciplined for AWOL by the agency. Each agency is responsible for determining whether the employee has adequate reasons for his or her absence.

Employees who are not designated as emergency employees or not required to telework should be granted excused absence when their office is closed and they are prevented from working due to the emergency. However, excused absence should not be granted to employees on (1) leave without pay, (2) official travel, or (3) a flexible or compressed work schedule day off.

IV. OPM Guidance on Dismissal and Closure Procedures

The *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* uses the following announcements:

A. OPM Announcement: OPEN

What OPM Announcement Means: “Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees are expected to report to their worksite or begin telework on time.”

Normal operating procedures are in effect. Employees account for their hours of work by **WATS**:

- Working at a worksite (typically the office) in the DC area,
- Alternative work schedules (AWS) day off,
- Teleworking, or
- Scheduled leave or other paid time off.

B. OPM Announcement: OPEN WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK

What OPM Announcement Means: “Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** and employees have the **OPTION** for **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.**”

Non-Emergency Employees. Non-emergency employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework (if telework-ready). In accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees have the option to use (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate; (2) leave without pay; (3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready).

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees who are regularly scheduled to perform telework or who notify their supervisor of their intention to perform unscheduled telework must be prepared to telework for the entire workday, or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both, for the entire workday, in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to report to their worksites on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

C. OPM Announcement: OPEN – XX HOUR(S) DELAYED ARRIVAL – WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK

What OPM Announcement Means: “Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** under **XX HOUR(S) DELAYED ARRIVAL** and employees have the **OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.**”

Delayed Arrival. Non-emergency employees should plan their commute so the arrival for work is no more than XX hour(s) later than the employees’ normal arrival times. For example, if OPM announces a 2-hour delayed arrival policy, employees who normally would arrive at 8:00 a.m. should arrive for work no later than 10:00 a.m. Such employees will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for up to the designated number of hours past their normal arrival times.

Non-Emergency Employees. Non-emergency employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework. In accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees have the option to use (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate; (2) leave without pay;

(3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready). Employees who request unscheduled leave should be charged leave for the entire workday.

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees who are regularly scheduled to perform telework, or who notify their supervisors of their intention to perform unscheduled telework, must be prepared to telework the entire workday or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both, for the entire workday in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to report to their worksites on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

Flexible Work Schedules. For employees under flexible work schedules, agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>.

Pre-approved or Unscheduled Leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who have notified their supervisors of their intent to use unscheduled leave when a delayed arrival is announced should be charged leave for the entire workday. Such employees should not be granted excused absence.

Personal Hardship. An agency may grant excused absence to employees who arrive later than their expected arrival time, if delayed for personal hardship reasons. For example, if OPM announces a 2-hour delayed arrival policy, and employees arrive for work 3 hours later than their expected arrival times, the employees should be charged 1 hour of leave. However, in the case of unique circumstances or hardships, agencies may grant excused absence for the excess time. Nonetheless, the circumstances under which a personal hardship may be granted are subject to collective bargaining, where applicable.

D. OPM Announcement: OPEN – DELAYED ARRIVAL – EMPLOYEES SHOULD REMAIN OFF THE ROADS UNTIL XX:XX. FEDERAL OFFICES WILL OPEN AT YY:YY. EMPLOYEES HAVE THE OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK

What OPM Announcement Means: "Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** under a **DELAYED ARRIVAL**. Employees should remain **OFF THE ROADS** until **XX:XX**. **FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area will **OPEN** at **YY:YY**. Employees have the **OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK**."

Delayed Arrival. Non-emergency employees should remain off the roads until the time designated by OPM, but should arrive at their offices before the announced opening time. For example, if OPM announces all employees should remain off the roads until 9:00 a.m. and Federal offices will open at 11:00 a.m., non-emergency employees should

begin their commute no earlier than 9:00 a.m. and will receive excused absence (administrative leave) until 11:00 a.m.

Non-Emergency Employees. Non-emergency employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework. In accordance with their agency's policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees have the option to use (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate; (2) leave without pay; (3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready). Employees who request unscheduled leave should be charged leave for the entire workday.

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees who are regularly scheduled to perform telework or who notify their supervisors of their intention to perform unscheduled telework must be prepared to telework the entire workday or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both, for the entire workday in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to report to their worksites on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

Pre-approved or Unscheduled Leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who have notified their supervisors of their intent to use unscheduled leave when a delayed arrival is announced should be charged leave for the entire workday. Such employees should not be granted excused absence.

Personal Hardship. An agency may grant excused absence to employees who arrive after Federal offices open, if delayed for personal hardship reasons. For example, if OPM announces Federal offices will open at 11:00 a.m., and employees arrive for work at 12:00 p.m., the employees should be charged 1 hour of leave. However, in the case of unique circumstances or hardships, agencies may grant excused absence for the excess time. Nonetheless, the circumstances under which a personal hardship may be granted are subject to collective bargaining, where applicable.

E. OPM Announcement: OPEN - XX HOUR(S) STAGGERED EARLY DEPARTURE

What OPM Announcement Means: "Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees should depart **XX HOUR(S)** earlier than their normal departure times from the office and may request **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE** to depart prior to their staggered departure times."

Early Departure Time. Non-emergency employees will be dismissed from their offices early relative to their scheduled departure times and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday beyond their early departure time. For example, if a 3-hour staggered early departure is announced, employees who work 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. would be expected to depart at 2:00 p.m. (i.e., the employees' staggered departure time).

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees performing telework must continue to telework or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both for the entire workday in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Departure Prior to Early Dismissal Time. Non-emergency employees who wish to depart prior to their staggered early departure time may request to use unscheduled leave. Such employees will be charged leave for the remainder of their workday and will not be granted excused absence.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to remain at their worksites unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

Flexible Work Schedules. For employees under flexible work schedules, agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>.

Pre-approved leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who have requested unscheduled leave before an early departure policy is announced should continue to be charged leave for the entire workday or remainder of the workday, as applicable. Employees who are not affected by the emergency (i.e., not prevented from working) should not be granted excused absence (administrative leave).

- If employees are on leave and are not scheduled to return on that day, the employees are not prevented from working by the emergency and should continue to be charged leave.
- If employees on leave are scheduled to return to work after the applicable staggered departure time, the employees should be granted excused absence starting from the time they were scheduled to return from leave.
- If employees have pre-approved leave commencing after their staggered departure times (e.g., for a medical appointment), an agency may consider granting excused absence.

Personal hardships. Agencies may grant excused absence to permit employees to depart early to avoid personal hardships (e.g., when there is no available public transportation or no alternative forms of child/elder care, or the employee has health/medical limitations). However, agencies should bear in mind that the purpose of the early departure policy is to allow an orderly staggered release of Federal employees in the Washington, DC, area so as to avoid traffic gridlock and overcrowding of the public transit systems and to facilitate snow removal and operational capabilities of emergency first responders. Nonetheless, the circumstances under which a personal hardship may be granted are subject to collective bargaining, where applicable.

Employees who work from remote locations. Employees who work from remote locations may be required to work during any closure of their agencies' home office, consistent with their agencies' policies, procedures, and any applicable collective

bargaining requirements. If Federal offices in the geographic area of their remote location announce an early departure (e.g., a snow emergency), such employees should follow their agency's policies, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining requirements, or contact their supervisor for further information and instructions.

Employees on official travel. If non-emergency employees are on official travel on a workday when their agency offices are closed in the Washington, DC, area, employees are expected to continue working. However, if the emergency procedures of the agency make it impossible for the employees to continue work – e.g., the travel assignment requires frequent contact with the agency in the Washington, DC, area – excused absence may be appropriate. Agencies are responsible for determining whether employees are required to continue working or will be granted excused absence under these circumstances.

F. OPM Announcement: OPEN - XX HOUR(S) STAGGERED EARLY DEPARTURE – EMPLOYEES MUST DEPART NO LATER THAN XX: XX AT WHICH TIME FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED.

What OPM Announcement Means: “Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees should depart **XX HOUR(S)** earlier than their normal departure time and may request **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE** to depart prior to their staggered departure time. Employees **MUST DEPART** at no later than **XX: XX** at which time **FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area are **CLOSED**.”

Early Departure Time. Non-emergency employees will be dismissed relative to their normal departure times and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workdays beyond their staggered departure time. All remaining non-emergency employees whose staggered departure times are later than the final departure time should depart from their office at the final departure time. All employees who depart at the final departure time will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday, even if more than the **XX** hour(s) provided in the OPM announcement. For example, if a 3-hour staggered emergency early dismissal is announced with a final departure time at 2:00 p.m., and an employee works 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., the employee should leave at 12:30 p.m. (i.e., the employee's early departure time). However, if an employee works 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., the employee should depart at 2:00 p.m. (the final departure time) instead of the employee's staggered departure time at 3:00 p.m. In this case, the employee would receive 4 hours of excused absence (i.e., 2:00 to 6:00 p.m.).

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees performing telework must continue to telework or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both for the entire workday in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Departure Prior to Early Dismissal Time. Non-emergency employees who depart prior to their staggered early departure time or final departure time may request to use unscheduled leave. Such employees will be charged leave for the remainder of their workday and will not be granted excused absence.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to remain at their worksite unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

Flexible Work Schedules. For employees under flexible work schedules, agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>.

Pre-approved leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who have requested unscheduled leave before an early departure policy is announced should continue to be charged leave for the entire workday or the remainder of the workday, as applicable. Employees who are not affected by the emergency (not prevented from working) should not be granted excused absence (administrative leave).

- If employees are on leave and are not scheduled to return on that day, the employees are not prevented from working by the emergency and should continue to be charged leave.
- If employees on leave are scheduled to return to work after the staggered departure or final departure time, as applicable, the employees should be granted excused absence starting from the time they were scheduled to return from leave.
- If employees have pre-approved leave commencing after their staggered departure times (e.g., for a medical appointment), an agency may consider granting excused absence.

Personal hardships. Agencies may grant excused absence to permit employees to depart early to avoid personal hardships (e.g., when there is no available public transportation or alternative forms of child/elder care, or the employee has health/medical limitations). However, agencies should bear in mind that the purpose of the early departure policy is to allow an orderly staggered release of Federal employees in the Washington, DC, area so as to avoid traffic gridlock and overcrowding of the public transit systems, and to facilitate snow removal and operational capabilities of emergency first responders. Nonetheless, the circumstances under which a personal hardship may be granted are subject to collective bargaining, where applicable.

Employees who work from remote locations. Employees who work from remote locations may be required to work during any closure of their agency's home office, consistent with their agencies' policies, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining requirements agreements. If Federal offices in the geographic area of their remote location announce an early departure (e.g., a snow emergency), such employees should follow their agency's policies, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining requirements agreements, or contact their supervisor for further information and instructions.

Employees on official travel. If non-emergency employees are on official travel on a workday when their agency offices are closed in the Washington, DC, area, employees are expected to continue working. However, if the emergency procedures of the agency make it impossible for the employees to continue work – e.g., the travel assignment

requires frequent contact with the agency in the Washington, DC, area – excused absence may be appropriate. Agencies are responsible for determining whether employees are required to continue working or will be granted excused absence under these circumstances.

G. OPM Announcement: IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE—FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED

What OPM Announcement Means: “**IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE.** Employees should depart **IMMEDIATELY. FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area are **CLOSED.**”

Immediate Departure. Non-emergency employees should depart immediately from their offices. All non-emergency employees will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday. For example, if OPM announces an immediate departure at 12:00 p.m., all non-emergency employees will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their scheduled workday unless covered by one of the exceptions listed below.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to remain at their worksites unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

Exceptions

Employees who leave before an immediate departure policy is announced. Employees who depart before an immediate departure policy is announced should be charged annual leave or leave without pay beginning at the time the employees left work and for the remainder of their scheduled workday.

Employees scheduled to return to work. If employees are scheduled to return from leave after an immediate departure is announced, the agency should charge leave for the period prior to the immediate departure time and grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following the immediate departure time.

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees performing telework must continue to telework for the entire workday or take unscheduled leave for the remainder of the workday, as applicable in accordance with their agencies’ policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Employees who work from remote locations. Employees who work from remote locations may be required to work during any closure of their agency’s home office, consistent with their agencies’ policies, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining requirements. If Federal offices in the geographic area of their remote location are closed (e.g., a snow emergency), such employees should follow their agency’s policies, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining requirements, or contact their supervisor for further information and instructions.

Employees on official travel. If non-emergency employees are on official travel on a workday when their agency’s offices are closed in the Washington, DC, area, employees

are expected to continue working. However, if the emergency procedures of the agency make it impossible for the employees to continue work – e.g., the travel assignment requires frequent contact with the agency in the Washington, DC, area – excused absence may be appropriate. The agency is responsible for determining whether employees are required to continue working or will be granted excused absence under these circumstances.

Employees on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off. If Federal offices are closed on the employees' regular AWS day off, they are not entitled to an additional "in lieu of" day off. AWS employees who fulfill their biweekly work requirement in less than 10 working days are already entitled to an AWS day off. Such employees may not receive an additional day off. In addition, employees cannot be granted excused absence on a nonworkday. AWS employees whose agency's offices are closed on their AWS day off may not be granted excused absence for the scheduled nonworkday.

H. OPM Announcement: FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED – EMERGENCY AND TELEWORK-READY EMPLOYEES MUST FOLLOW THEIR AGENCY'S POLICIES

What OPM Announcement Means: "FEDERAL OFFICES in the Washington, DC, area are **CLOSED**. Emergency and telework-ready employees required to work must follow their agency's policies, including written telework agreements."

Federal offices are closed. Non-emergency employees (including employees on pre-approved paid leave) will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours they were scheduled to work unless covered by one of the exceptions listed below.

Emergency Employees. Emergency employees are expected to report for work on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

Exceptions

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees who are scheduled to perform telework on the effective day of the announcement or who are required to perform telework on a day when Federal offices are closed must telework the entire workday or request leave, or a combination of both, in accordance with their agencies' policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Employees on leave without pay. Employees on leave without pay, leave without pay for military duty, workers' compensation, suspension, or in another nonpay status are not granted excused absence when Federal offices are closed. These employees should remain in their current status. Employees in a nonpay status have no expectation of working and receiving pay for a day during which Federal offices are closed and therefore will not be granted excused absence.

Employees who work from remote locations. Employees who work from remote locations may be required to work during any closure of their agency's home office, consistent with their agencies' policies, procedures, and any applicable collective

bargaining requirements. If Federal offices in the geographic area of their remote location are closed (e.g., a snow emergency), such employees should follow their agency's policies, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining requirements, or contact their supervisor for further information and instructions.

Employees on official travel. If non-emergency employees are on official travel on a workday when their agency's offices are closed in the Washington, DC, area, employees are expected to continue working. However, if the emergency procedures of the agency make it impossible for the employees to continue work – e.g., the travel assignment requires frequent contact with the agency in the Washington, DC, area – excused absence may be appropriate. The agency is responsible for determining whether employees are required to continue working or will be granted excused absence under these circumstances.

Employees on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off. If Federal offices are closed on the employees' regular AWS day off, they are not entitled to an additional "in lieu of" day off. AWS employees who fulfill their biweekly work requirement in less than 10 working days are already entitled to an AWS day off. Such employees may not receive an additional day off. In addition, employees cannot be granted excused absence on a nonworkday. AWS employees whose agency's offices are closed on their AWS day off may not be granted excused absence for the scheduled nonworkday.

I. OPM Announcement: SHELTER-IN-PLACE

What OPM Announcement Means: “**FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area are under **SHELTER-IN-PLACE** procedures and are **CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.**”

General Description. Shelter-in-place (SIP) procedures are conducted when employees (and visitors) must remain in the office or take immediate shelter in a readily accessible interior location to protect themselves. An SIP may be needed for a variety of reasons, which could include severe weather (e.g., tornadoes) or danger from exposure to outside contaminants in the event of a release into the atmosphere of hazardous materials such as radiological, biological, or chemical contaminants. A shelter-in-place announcement could be used with other OPM operations status announcements for the Washington, DC, area. It is anticipated that an OPM shelter-in-place announcement for the Washington, DC, area would be extremely rare and likely would be in effect for a relatively short period of time. OPM's announcement is not intended to supersede any agency-specific SIP plans or procedures, and agencies retain the authority to act on their own without an OPM SIP announcement as circumstances dictate.

Employees Located at Agency Worksites. All employees should follow their agency's emergency procedure for shelter-in-place announcements. Employees should remain in their designated safe area until they are notified by agency officials that they may return to their offices or leave their worksites.

Employees Prevented from Entering Agency Worksites. Employees who are unable to enter their buildings due to shelter-in-place procedures should be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the duration of the announcement.

Telework-Ready Employees. Telework-ready employees performing telework are expected to continue working during the shelter-in-place, unless affected by the emergency or otherwise notified by their agencies.

V. OPM and Agency Responsibilities

OPM's Responsibilities

1. In the Washington, DC, area, OPM is the Federal Government's point of contact with municipal governments and regional organizations, such as the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). OPM officials will consult with various officials, including appropriate Federal, DC government, municipal, and regional officials before the OPM Director makes operating status announcements.
2. The Director of OPM will make a decision on the status of Federal operations. This decision will be based on consideration of both the need to keep Federal operations functioning as normally as possible and our concern for the safety of Federal employees.
3. OPM will notify agency Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs) and Human Resources Directors of any decision to announce unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, a delayed arrival, early departure, immediate departure, shelter in place, or closure of Federal offices. Information will be available at <http://www.opm.gov/status/index.aspx> or by phone at (202) 606-1900.

Agencies' Responsibilities

1. Agencies should establish policies and procedures to be consistent with and implement OPM's *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*. This includes revising and updating employees' written telework agreements and incorporating such agreements into emergency planning, including updating internal agency announcements based on OPM's latest changes.
2. Agencies should develop explicit procedures in advance that employees may use during emergencies to notify their supervisor promptly of their intent to use unscheduled leave or perform unscheduled telework (if telework-ready) prior to the start of the workday or as soon as practicable. Agencies should also develop similar procedures for employees to request unscheduled leave when OPM announces an early departure with either a staggered or final departure time or an immediate departure after the workday has already begun.
3. At least annually, agencies should identify emergency employees (including COOP employees) and notify them in writing. The written notice should include the requirement that emergency employees report for work or remain at work (or work at

home or report to an alternative worksite) when Government operations are disrupted and an explanation that announcements of unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework, delayed arrival, early or immediate departure, or Federal offices are closed in the Washington, DC, area do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise.

4. Agencies must establish policies for the use of unscheduled telework. Using telework as an option when unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework or delayed arrival announcements are made will likely be more frequent than when announcements are made to close Federal offices. For the majority of OPM's announcements, it is expected that telework will be an available flexibility to allow telework-ready employees to avoid lengthy commutes or use leave unnecessarily.
5. To implement and/or maintain telework readiness, agencies should continue to (1) review their current telework policies to ensure that telework is integrated as part of the flexibilities permitted during disruption of normal operating procedures; (2) ensure that the IT infrastructure is in place to allow large numbers of employees to telework simultaneously; (3) establish new situational (ad-hoc) telework arrangements for employees who can telework, and wish to do so on a situational (ad hoc) basis, but typically do not; and (4) permit or require all employees who can telework, and who wish to do so on at least a situational (ad hoc) basis, to practice it regularly and frequently to maintain effectiveness and ensure functionality.
6. OPM urges agencies to expand their policies, procedures, and telework agreements, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, as applicable, so that when OPM announces that Federal offices in the Washington, DC, area are closed, employees with telework agreements will be expected to work on those days rather than be granted excused absence (administrative leave). Agencies and employees should take into account the quid-pro-quo benefits of telework. That is, telework is an option to maintain work productivity without compromising employee safety, and telework is an option available all year long to help employees balance personal and work needs.
7. For employees who are expected to telework when Federal offices are closed, it is imperative that they have the opportunity to telework on a regular basis to ensure that they will be able to function effectively and efficiently.
8. For telework-ready employees, any requirements concerning the unscheduled telework option should be explicit in their telework agreements. If an agency determines that certain circumstances may require non-emergency employees to report for work or remain at work when Government operations are disrupted, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually prior to the emergency.
9. Agencies must establish internal policies for employees regarding the use of unscheduled leave and flexible work schedules. This includes explicit policies on the use of leave without pay, ability to change an AWS day off, or flexibility to rearrange starting and stopping times under a flexible work schedule when an OPM operating status announcement is made that includes one of these flexibilities. If an agency determines that certain circumstances may require non-emergency employees to

report for work or remain at work when Government operations are disrupted, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually prior to the emergency.

10. Agencies must notify employees that, if they are required to report for work and fail to do so, they will be charged absence without leave (AWOL) for the period not worked and may potentially be disciplined for AWOL upon further determination by the agency. (See Failure to Report for Work.) In unique situations, an agency may determine that circumstances justify excusing emergency employees or non-emergency employees from duty, and they may be granted excused absence administrative leave).
11. Agencies are responsible for determining dismissal policies, emergency procedures, and leave policies for employees on shift work and alternative work schedules (i.e., flexible or compressed work schedules) and for informing employees of these policies. Agencies should consult OPM's *Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* (see information on "Excused Absence" in the "Flexible Work Schedules" section) to determine the "normal arrival and departure times" of employees on flexible schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws/index.htm>
12. Agencies should have shelter-in-place plans developed to use during certain emergencies. These plans should be communicated clearly to their employees and tested periodically.
13. During an agency-specific closure or dismissal, agencies should have their own methods for communicating and updating their status of operations to employees. These methods could include agency website notices, emergency call-in phone numbers, phone trees, automated emails, media announcements, etc. To the extent possible, each agency should notify OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison and the CHCO Executive Director of any agency-specific closure or dismissal.
14. For weather-related situations in certain large metropolitan areas outside of the Washington, DC, area, the Federal Executive Boards provide up-to-date, accurate, and consistent information, such as from the National Weather Service, to their local Federal agency leaders to assist them in making informed decisions on the appropriate operating status for their Federal agency employees in those areas. Each local Federal agency head makes workforce status decisions for his or her agency employees and should report that workforce status decision to his or her agency Headquarters. While the operating status of the Federal Government in the Washington, DC, area can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/status/index.aspx>, Federal employees in geographic areas outside of the Washington, DC, area should check with their own agency regarding the operating status of their duty station.

VI. Additional Resources for Emergency Guidance

In any emergency situation, Government operations may be disrupted for extended periods. OPM has provided numerous resources to enable Federal agencies to continue functioning effectively during an emergency situation. The following information offers further guidance on continuing operations during extended emergencies and emergency preparedness:

Handbook on Pay and Leave Benefits for Federal Employees Affected by Severe Weather Emergencies or Other Emergency Situations

[http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2008/HandbookForEmergencies\(PayAndLeave\).pdf](http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2008/HandbookForEmergencies(PayAndLeave).pdf)

Emergency Situations That Prevent Employees from Reporting for Work

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/PreventEmpsReportingforWork.asp>

Emergency Situations That Restrict Employees to Their Agency's Premises ("Shelter in Place")

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/ShelterInPlace.asp>

Furloughs Due to Extended Emergencies

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/Furloughs.asp>

Telework.Gov – Emergency Planning

http://www.telework.gov/guidance_and_legislation/emergency_planning/index.aspx

Ready.Gov – Emergency Planning

<http://www.ready.gov/>

**Appendix: OPM Announcements on the Status of Federal Government
Operations in the Washington, DC, Area**

STATUS OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS WASHINGTON, DC, AREA	
The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provides the following announcements to the media when a disruption occurs before or during the workday in the Washington, DC, area.	
Announcement	What Announcement Means
OPEN	<p>“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are OPEN.”</p> <p>Employees are expected to report to their worksites or begin telework on time. Normal operating procedures are in effect.</p> <p>Employees account for their hours of work by WATS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working at a worksite in the DC area, • Alternative work schedules (AWS) day off, • Teleworking, or • Scheduled leave or other paid time off.

**OPEN WITH OPTION FOR
UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR
UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** and employees have the **OPTION** for **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.**”

Non-Emergency Employees must notify their supervisor of their intent to use unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework (if telework-ready). In accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees have the option to use:

- (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate;
- (2) leave without pay;
- (3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or
- (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready).

Telework-Ready Employees who are regularly scheduled to perform telework or who notify their supervisor of their intention to perform unscheduled telework must be prepared to telework for the entire workday, or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both, for the entire workday in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees are expected to report to their worksites on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

OPEN – XX HOUR(S) DELAYED ARRIVAL – WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** under **XX HOUR(S) DELAYED ARRIVAL** and employees have the **OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK**. Employees should plan to arrive for work no more than XX hour(s) later than they would be expected to arrive.”

Non-Emergency Employees who report to the office will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for up to XX hour(s) past their expected arrival time. In accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees may notify their supervisor of their intent to use:

- (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate;
- (2) leave without pay;
- (3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or
- (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready).

(Employees who request unscheduled leave should be charged leave for the entire workday.)

Telework-Ready Employees who are regularly scheduled to perform telework or who notify their supervisor of their intention to perform unscheduled telework must be prepared to telework for the entire workday, or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both, for the entire workday in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Pre-approved Leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who requested unscheduled leave for the entire workday should be charged leave for the entire day.

Emergency Employees are expected to report to their worksite on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

OPEN – DELAYED ARRIVAL – EMPLOYEES SHOULD REMAIN OFF THE ROADS UNTIL XX:XX. FEDERAL OFFICES WILL OPEN AT YY:YY. EMPLOYEES HAVE THE OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN** under a **DELAYED ARRIVAL**. Employees should remain **OFF THE ROADS** until **XX:XX**. **FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area will **OPEN** at **YY:YY**. Employees have the **OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK.**”

Non-Emergency Employees who report to the office will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) up until the time when Federal offices open. In accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements, non-emergency employees may notify their supervisor of their intent to use:

- (1) earned annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate;
- (2) leave without pay;
- (3) their flexible work schedule day off or rearrange their work hours under flexible work schedules; or
- (4) unscheduled telework (if telework-ready).

(Employees who request unscheduled leave should be charged leave for the entire workday.)

Telework-Ready Employees who are regularly scheduled to perform telework or who notify their supervisor of their intention to perform unscheduled telework must be prepared to telework for the entire workday, or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both, for the entire workday in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Pre-approved Leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday should be charged leave for the entire workday.

Emergency Employees are expected to report to their worksite on time unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

**OPEN - XX HOUR(S)
STAGGERED EARLY
DEPARTURE**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees should depart **XX HOUR(S)** earlier than their normal departure times and may request **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE** to depart prior to their staggered departure times.”

Non-emergency Employees:

Excused Absence. Non-emergency employees will be dismissed from their office XX hour(s) early relative to their normal departure times and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday.

Departure Prior to Early Departure Time. Non-emergency employees who depart prior to their staggered early departure times may request to use unscheduled leave. Such employees will be charged leave for the remainder of their workday and will not be granted excused absence.

Telework-Ready Employees performing telework must continue to telework or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both for the entire workday or the remainder of the workday, as applicable, in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Pre-approved leave. An employee on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or an employee who has requested unscheduled leave before an early departure policy is announced should continue to be charged leave for the remainder of the workday.

Emergency Employees are expected to remain at their worksite unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

**OPEN - XX HOUR(S)
STAGGERED EARLY
DEPARTURE – ALL
EMPLOYEES MUST DEPART
NO LATER THAN XX: XX AT
WHICH TIME FEDERAL
OFFICES ARE CLOSED**

“Federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area are **OPEN**. Employees should depart **XX HOUR(S)** earlier than their normal departure time and may request **UNSCHEDULED LEAVE** to depart prior to their staggered departure time. All employees **MUST DEPART** at no later than XX: XX at which time **FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area are **CLOSED**.”

Non-emergency Employees:

Excused Absence. Non-emergency employees will be dismissed from their office early relative to their normal departure time or at the final departure time and will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday beyond their early departure time or their final departure time.

Departure Prior to Early Departure Time. Non-emergency employees who depart prior to their staggered early departure time or final departure time may request to use unscheduled leave. Such employees will be charged leave for the remainder of their workday and will not be granted excused absence.

Pre-approved leave. Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire workday or employees who have requested unscheduled leave before an early departure policy is announced should continue to be charged annual or sick leave for the entire day or remainder of the workday, as applicable.

Telework-Ready Employees performing telework must continue to telework or take unscheduled leave, or a combination of both for the entire workday in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees are expected to remain at their worksite unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

**IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE –
FEDERAL OFFICES ARE
CLOSED**

“IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE. Employees should depart **IMMEDIATELY. FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area are **CLOSED.**”

Non-emergency employees should depart immediately from the office. All non-emergency employees will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours remaining in their workday unless they are:

- on official travel outside of the Washington, DC, area,
- on leave without pay, or
- on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off.

Telework-Ready Employees performing telework must continue to telework for the entire workday or take unscheduled leave for the remainder of the workday, as applicable in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees are expected to remain at their worksite unless otherwise directed by their agencies

**FEDERAL OFFICES ARE
CLOSED – EMERGENCY AND
TELEWORK-READY
EMPLOYEES MUST FOLLOW
THEIR AGENCY’S POLICIES**

“**FEDERAL OFFICES** in the Washington, DC, area are **CLOSED**. Emergency and telework-ready employees required to work must follow their agency’s policies, including written telework agreements.”

Non-emergency employees (including employees on pre-approved paid leave) will be granted excused absence (administrative leave) for the number of hours they were scheduled to work unless they are:

- required to telework,
- on official travel outside of the Washington, DC, area,
- on leave without pay, or
- on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off.

Telework-Ready Employees who are scheduled to perform telework on the effective day of the announcement or who are required to perform telework on a day when Federal offices are closed must telework the entire workday or request leave, or a combination of both, in accordance with their agency’s policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements.

Emergency Employees are expected to report to their worksite unless otherwise directed by their agencies.

<p>SHELTER-IN-PLACE</p>	<p>“FEDERAL OFFICES in the Washington, DC, area are under SHELTER-IN-PLACE procedures and are CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.”</p> <p><i>Employees Located at Agency Worksite.</i> All employees should follow their agency’s emergency procedures for shelter-in-place. Employees should remain in their designated safe area until they are notified by agency officials that they may return to the office or leave the worksite.</p> <p><i>Telework-Ready Employees</i> performing telework are expected to continue working during the shelter-in-place unless affected by the emergency or otherwise notified by their agencies.</p>
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Note: As a general principle, OPM reserves the right to issue a new or hybrid operating status announcement at any time, depending on the particulars of an emergency, for the safety of employees and continuity of Government operations. OPM will always attempt to use the published operating status announcements.



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