



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

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MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: KATHERINE ARCHULETA  
DIRECTOR

Subject: Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

As the 2013-2014 winter season approaches, we want to remind Federal agencies and employees that we have updated the dismissal and emergency procedures for the Washington, DC area, in the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures (Procedures)* document, available on our website.

These *Procedures* are based on the principle that the Federal Government's vital business must continue without compromising the safety of our employees and the general public. Although these procedures are typically issued in winter, the announcements are applicable for any emergency or special event that causes a disruption inside the "Washington Beltway" area.

Federal agencies and employees in the Washington, DC, area should be prepared to respond immediately to an emergency. Whether you are new to the Federal workforce or have been a part of our team for decades, it's important to review the policies that are designed to keep us safe when an emergency occurs.

As the past several years have taught us, snowstorms are not the only concern. Emergencies come in all forms – from earthquakes to hurricanes. So it is crucial that you be prepared to react. Most of all, remember to communicate – to your employees, to your supervisors, and to your families. Together we can work to ensure everyone's safety and the continuity of the Government when it is most necessary.

During the past few years, OPM has consulted with an interagency working group of human resources specialists, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), and national labor organizations to ensure that our *Procedures* reflect the needs of the human resources community. We've also coordinated with Federal, State, and local emergency management and transportation officials to ensure that each announcement supports the needs of the emergency situation. This year, OPM's primary goal is to make sure that agencies are aware of OPM's *Procedures* and that the agencies continue to develop and communicate their policies associated with the *Procedures* to make the best use of all available human resources tools.

### Communicating Expectations

OPM's operating status announcements are only effective if each employee understands what the announcement means and how to react. OPM provides the announcement that



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must be accompanied by specific agency procedures, as reflected in employee telework agreements, and/or collective bargaining agreements.

It is paramount that agencies communicate expectations to their employees in written policies and procedures, subject to any applicable collective bargaining responsibilities. Expectations must be made clear in continuity or operations plans, as well as written telework agreements, in compliance with the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. Employees must understand which human resources flexibilities are available to them during specific agency operating procedures, such as unscheduled telework, unscheduled leave, leave without pay, alternative work schedule day off, etc. In an emergency situation, timing is crucial. Employees must be able to act under their own agency's procedures when unscheduled telework or unscheduled leave are options, or when employees are required to telework when the Federal Government is closed.

### **Migrating Toward Uniform Telework Policies and Procedures**

Over the past few winters, unscheduled telework has become 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 the increased use of unscheduled telework has enhanced our COOP capabilities during severe weather, special events, and other emergency situations, agencies must continue to expand their usage of telework to allow a greater number of telework-ready employees to be productive during Government closures in order to meet the Act's objectives.

### **Importance of Following OPM Announcements**

It is essential that covered Federal agencies and employees comply with the *Procedures* for Governmentwide emergencies or special events that create a disruption in the Washington metropolitan area. The announcements apply to employees working in all Executive agencies with offices located inside the "Washington Capital Beltway." In the event of an area-wide work disruption, agencies should avoid taking independent action because changes in the commuting hours of Federal employees can result in dramatic disruption of the highway and mass transit systems. Following OPM's announcements and policies will allow for coordination with municipal and regional officials, and will reduce disruption of the highway and transit systems. This will both reduce traffic congestion and ensure that affected employees are treated as consistently as possible.

For agency-specific emergencies, agencies must follow their internal agency emergency operating procedures. Agencies possess the authority to release employees and/or close individual facilities to the public on a localized, building-by-building basis, and should exercise this authority during localized emergencies such as a building fire or limited flooding.

**For More Information**

Announcements on the status of Government operations in the Washington, DC, area will be available at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/current-status>. Recorded messages on operating status also will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison on (202) 606-1900. Additionally, the OPM Alert mobile app allows employees to instantly view the current and active operating status and to sign up for optional push notifications when status changes occur. Please visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/mobile-app> for more information.

Employees should contact their agency human resources office for further information on the implementation of the *Procedures*. For general information on Federal pay, leave, and work scheduling policies, please visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave>. Agency field offices should contact their appropriate headquarters-level agency human resources office. Agency headquarters-level human resources offices may contact Pay and Leave at OPM at [pay-leave-policy@opm.gov](mailto:pay-leave-policy@opm.gov). Requests from individual employees will be returned or forwarded to the appropriate agency human resources office.

Link to Guidance: [Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures](#)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers  
Human Resources Directors