



A New Day for the Civil Service

Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures

2012-2013

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Process

- OPM reviews the *Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures* (Procedures) annually and updates guidance and operating status announcements as needed
- The Procedures cover executive branch agencies within the Capital Beltway
- OPM consulted with a working group of HR specialists from agencies and representatives from national labor organizations, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG), and FEMA



Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (January 23rd Ice Storm)

- **Situation 1:** OPM operating status announcements did not address the current weather situation
- **Response 1:** OPM created new operating status announcement – “Delayed Arrival” with single opening time for Federal offices
 - **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**

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Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Hurricane Sandy)

- **Situation 2:** Old OPM Announcement: “Federal Offices Are Closed to the Public”
 - Not well understood by Federal employees and non-Federal institutions who adopt OPM policies
- **Response 2:** New OPM Announcement: “Federal Offices Are Closed – Emergency and Telework-Ready Employees Must Follow Their Agency’s Policies”

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Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Hurricane Sandy)

- **Situation 3:** On Monday and Tuesday, many telework-ready employees did not have written telework agreements that required them to work when Federal offices were closed
 - Group (1) – employees scheduled to telework on Monday and/or Tuesday in accordance with a written telework agreement
 - Group (2) – employees required to telework whenever Federal offices are closed in accordance with a written telework agreement
 - Group (3) – employees who are telework-ready but are not required to telework in accordance with a written telework agreement

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Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Hurricane Sandy)

- **Response 3:** OPM is urging agencies to complete their migration to telework
 - 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 understand that telework is voluntary, but that it is also an arrangement that helps agencies and employees to balance work and personal needs through emergent and non-emergent periods
 - Employees should be permitted to practice telework on a regular basis, including days when OPM announces unscheduled telework
 - Revise written telework agreements to require Group (3) telework-ready employees to telework during a day when the Federal Government is closed

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Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Hurricane Sandy)

- **Situation 4:** Some Federal employees outside of Washington, DC (e.g., New York and New Jersey), did not know the operating status of their agency and did not know if OPM's guidance (DC Procedures) applied to them
- **Response 4:** DC Procedures now state that outside of the Washington, DC, area, 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
 - In certain large metropolitan areas outside of the Washington, DC, area, the Federal Executive Boards provide recommendations for the operating status in those areas
 - In all other areas, Federal employees should follow their agency's procedures for finding out about operating status announcements and updates
 - The DC Procedures contain general guidance on human resources flexibilities that are consistent with laws and regulations and are applicable to emergencies in all areas. Employees must consult with their own agencies for specific procedures and instructions

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Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Interagency Workgroup Issues)

- **Situation 5:** OPM has issued operating status announcements that were not published in OPM's Procedures
- **Response 5:** OPM reserves the right to issue new or hybrid operating status announcements based on the emergency conditions
 - Any new or hybrid announcement will be made only after consulting with various officials, including appropriate Federal, DC government, municipal, and regional officials
 - Standard human resources flexibilities are core tools to assist employees during any operating status announcement
 - e.g., unscheduled telework, unscheduled leave, flexible work schedule day off



Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Interagency Workgroup Issues)

- **Situation 6:** Employees and supervisors were confused regarding the procedures to follow when OPM announces a change in the operating status
- **Response 6:** Redouble efforts to communicate expectations
- Both supervisors and employees must be able to react quickly to OPM operating status announcements without the need for additional approval on the day of the announcement
 - Agencies – must establish and communicate policies and procedures in accordance with any applicable collective bargaining requirements
 - Supervisors – must communicate and review work expectations with their employees
 - Employees – must communicate with supervisor and discuss options in advance of the emergency



Lessons Learned 2011-2012 (Interagency Workgroup Issues)

- **Situation 7:** Proper use of leave without pay (LWOP)
 - Questions arose regarding the right to use LWOP when OPM's operating status announcement includes unscheduled leave
- **Response 7:** The Procedures now provide OPM's guidance on the use of LWOP when unscheduled leave is an option
 - OPM's operating status announcements **do not** create an employee entitlement to LWOP
 - Each agency is responsible for managing LWOP and communicating policies to its employees