

WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA  
EMERGENCY DISMISSAL OR CLOSURE PROCEDURES

I. OPM Announcements About Late Arrival/Early Dismissal

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) sets the policy concerning Federal government employees' work obligations during emergency conditions such as severe weather, air pollution, power failure, or interruption of public transportation inside the Beltway. When emergency conditions occur before normal work hours, OPM will try to notify the news media of its policy by 6:00 a.m. OPM's website is <http://www.opm.gov>. OPM announcements apply to DOE Headquarters employees both inside and outside the Beltway.

II. Emergencies Before the Work Day Begins

If the emergency, or possible emergency arises before the work day begins, OPM will provide the media with one of the following announcements:

1. "Federal agencies are OPEN; employees are expected to report for work on time."

This means Federal agencies will open on time, and employees are expected to report for work as scheduled.

2. "Federal agencies are OPEN under an UNSCHEDULED LEAVE policy; employees may take leave without prior approval."

However, employees must notify their supervisors of their intent to take unscheduled leave. Emergency employees are expected to report for work on time.

3. "Federal agencies are OPEN under a DELAYED ARRIVAL policy";

Federal employees will be instructed to schedule their commutes so that they arrive for work no more than XX hours later than their normal arrival time and will be charged annual leave or leave without pay for the additional period of absence from work.

4. "Federal agencies are operating OPEN under a DELAYED ARRIVAL/ UNSCHEDULED LEAVE policy".

This is a combination of the two categories immediately above. Federal employees will be instructed to schedule their commutes so that they arrive for work no more than XX hours later than their normal arrival time and will be charged annual leave or leave without pay for the additional period of absence from work. Those employees who

cannot report for work may request unscheduled leave for their entire scheduled workday.

#### 5. "Federal agencies are CLOSED."

This means employees not designated as "emergency" are excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. Employees designated as "emergency" are expected to report for work on time.

### III. Emergencies at the Workplace During Normal Work Hours

When an emergency situation occurs during normal work hours, e.g., a winter storm, Headquarters will announce an adjusted work dismissal policy. What this means is that employees are released from work a certain amount of time prior to normal departure times without charge to personal leave. For example, if there is a three (3) hour adjustment and one's normal work day ends at 5:00 p.m., the employee would be released on excused absence beginning at 2:00 p.m.

In such early dismissal cases, the type and amount of leave you are charged depends on when you depart from the office. For example, if an employee leaves before an official early dismissal is authorized the employee may be charged either personal leave or absence without official leave for the entire absence. If an employee leaves with the supervisor's permission, after the official announcement, the employee would be charged personal leave (annual or leave without pay) for the time up to the set departure time and excused absence for the remainder of the day.

As you can see, determining one's leave status can be complicated depending on when one leaves the office. One should always try to talk with one's supervisor or another management official in the office before departing. If this is not possible, leave a written note or E-mail for the supervisor. Be aware, though, that simply leaving a message with the supervisor does not mean that your absence before the authorized departure time is approved.

### IV. Specific Additional Announcements for Offices in Germantown, MD

When necessary, special instructions are issued to employees in response to severe weather in the immediate Germantown area affecting the ability of employees to reach the Germantown facilities safely, or because other emergency or hazardous conditions exist. The instructions will be issued separately from any announcement by OPM and will inform employees of any exception or addition to the OPM announcement. For example, OPM may announce that Federal offices are open, but DOE Headquarters may determine those DOE facilities in the Germantown area are operating under a delayed arrival/unscheduled leave policy. Note that such an announcement only applies to employees who work in Germantown.

Announcements of special conditions affecting working operations at Germantown facilities will be made two ways: by radio and by a recorded telephone message. Announcements will be made on the following radio stations: WMAL (630 AM); WTOP (820 AM or 103.5 FM); WFMD (930 AM); and WFRE (99.9 FM). In addition, a special message will be recorded on the DOE Headquarters Operating Status Hotline. The message can be accessed by calling 301-903-SNOW (7669) or by accessing the Voice Mail 800 number 800-832-0885 and entering 3-SNOW (7669). Please be advised that when calling this number one may initially experience either continued ringing or a busy signal; this will be due to a large number of incoming calls. Messages will be available on the radio and telephone system as early as possible/practical, but normally by 6:00 a.m.

#### V. Excused Absence

Employees may be excused without loss of pay or charge to leave (i.e., grant a reasonable amount of excused absence) to avoid hardships. For example, excused absence may be granted to employees who need to leave before the official announcement of an adjusted work dismissal or before the employee's authorized time of dismissal because younger children are released from school/child care earlier than the announced dismissal time and no alternative forms of child care are available. However, employees have no entitlement to excused absence.

#### VI. Changes to Building Operating Status

The DOE Headquarters Operating Status Hotline message will be updated as soon as possible to reflect any changes to the operating status for any of the Headquarters buildings. The message can be accessed by calling 301-903-SNOW (7669) or by accessing the Voice Mail system at 800-832-0885 and entering 3-SNOW (7669).

Information regarding the operating status of the Federal government including specifics for employees in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area; and a copy of OPM's Washington, DC Area Dismissal or Closure Procedures Policy can be obtained at: [http://www.opm.gov/Operating\\_Status\\_Schedules/](http://www.opm.gov/Operating_Status_Schedules/)

12-22-2009