

Office of Human Resources

108 Emergency Closures

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Georgia Department of Human Services
Human Resources Policy #108

Emergency Closures

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Refer- O.C.G.A. 45-20-16 — Rules for accrual of leave, holidays, and compensation for closing of state offices utiliza-
ences: tion of accumulated sick leave conversion to and use of personal leave disapproval of sick leave procedure
for contesting disapproval regain of forfeited sick leave after reemployment
Rules of the State Personnel Board 478-1-16 — Absence from Work
Office of Planning and Budget Policy #7 — Rules, Regulations, and Procedures Governing Working Hours, the
Payment of Overtime and the Granting of Compensatory Time

Section A: Definition

1. For the purpose of this policy “Emergency Closures” is defined as office closings due to weather conditions or other emergency circumstances.

Section B: Communicating Emergency Closures

1. The DHS Commissioner will be notified of any authorized changes to normal work hours, if weather conditions or other emergency circumstances affecting all agencies statewide or within a geographic region develop during the workday. If such conditions develop during the night and warrant delayed opening or official closing, official announcements will be made by the Governor through the following media outlets:
 - a. In Metropolitan Atlanta: Television Broadcast Station WSB (ABC) Channel 2, and Radio Stations WSB AM 750 and WSB 95.5 FM will serve as official notification stations.
 - b. In areas outside Metropolitan Atlanta: Local radio stations that are part of the Georgia Public Broadcast (GPB) will carry official announcements.
2. Announcements will be made, as soon as possible following any decision to close state operations in any area. Employees should listen to one of the above stations for information about alternate work hours or office closings. Announcements on other stations than those listed above may be inaccurate.
3. In the absence of official notification of delayed opening or office closure, employees are expected to report to work on time or contact their supervisor or other appropriate agency personnel, as directed by the DHS Commissioner.

Section C: Affected and Unaffected Employees

1. When the Governor or DHS Commissioner closes an office because of weather conditions or other emergency circumstances, affected employees are excused from duty without loss of pay as provided in this Policy section. Employees who are not directly affected by an office closure will not be excused from work.
 - a. Employees considered directly affected by a closure:
 - I. Employees who are scheduled to work in an affected area during an emergency office closure.
 - II. Non-temporary salaried employees affected by the closure are paid for the scheduled work time they do not work because of the closure. This paid time off is not charged against their accrued leave.
 - III. The following employees are not eligible for compensation for absences due to emergency closure:
 1. Unaffected Employees,
 2. All Temporary Employees,
 3. All Hourly Employees except as provided in subsection (III)(5) below.
 4. Active, salaried, non-temporary employees who are rehired retirees of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia while receiving retirement annuity payments during the first 1,040 hours of work performed in the calendar year; and,
 5. Non-temporary, hourly employees will be paid for scheduled time not worked during any emergency closure occurring due to the Public Health State of Emergency declared on March 14, 2020. This provision does not apply to hourly rehired retirees of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia.
 - b. Employees considered unaffected by the closure include:
 - I. Employees who were not scheduled to work in an affected area during and emergency office closure.
 - II. Employees scheduled to use leave or compensatory time during an emergency office closure will be charged for that preapproved leave or compensatory time, as they are considered unaffected by the closure.
 - III. Employees referenced in Section D (1) and (2) below.
 - c. Essential Staff
 - I. DHS may determine it is essential to continue certain functions during an emergency office closure. Employees whose functions are deemed essential may be required to work, rather than excused from duty.
 1. Essential employees who are required to work must report for duty and remain for their entire shift or in excess of their normally scheduled shift, as required during an emergency closure to ensure continuity of essential operations. Each Division/Office Director is responsible for preparing a list of Essential Employees.

2. Division/Office Directors are responsible for informing their staff, in writing, of their designation as an “Essential Employee”, their assignment and the requirement to report to work on time for their regular work shift, whenever there are weather conditions or other emergency circumstances which may result in a DHS office or department closure. Directors should review the Essential Employee list annually and make changes accordingly.
3. Essential employees will be compensated as usual for the time worked during their normal work schedule and do not have any right to additional absence or compensation for this time, as a result of paid absence authorized for non-essential staff.
4. Essential employees who are required to work additional time because of an office or facility closing will be compensated in accordance with the provisions of the Office of Planning and Budget Policy #7 — Rules, Regulations and Procedures Governing Working Hours, the Payment of Overtime and the Granting of Compensatory Time.
5. Essential employees who fail to report to work may be subject to disciplinary action under DHS Human Resources Policy #1201 — Conduct Standards and Ethics in Government and their absence will be charged to leave, as appropriate.

Section D: Telework

1. Employees who are scheduled to telework are not affected by the office closure. They are expected to telework, or request leave as usual. The only exception is, if the employee is unable to telework due to unusual circumstances, such as a power outage. Employees who have been authorized to telework under the department’s policy may be required to telework, regardless of whether they were scheduled to do so on the date of closure.
2. During extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disaster, an infectious disease outbreak, quarantine, or other crisis etc.) the Governor or DHS Commissioner may require all employees whose jobs are telework suitable to work remotely from home until notified otherwise.

Section E: Accrued Leave Usage

1. If an employee is absent from duty because of severe weather conditions or other emergencies that do not cause their office or facility to close, the absence will be charged to:
 - a. Make up time lost from work, if permitted by supervisor. In order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act, a non-exempt employee must make up time during the same work-week as the time lost.
 - b. Charge the period of absence to accrued compensatory time;
 - c. Charge the period of absence to accrued annual leave;
 - d. Charge the period of absence to personal leave;
 - e. Telework (if determined appropriate by DHS); or

If none of the above options are available, place the employee on leave without pay for the period of absence.

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local Human Resource Office, or email DHS-Policies@dhs.ga.gov.