

Number 11.3 - EMERGENCY CLOSING

Effective Date: March 1, 1996

Applicable To: All classified employees, as well as exempt, appointed, and temporary, with the Executive Branch of the State of Vermont.

Issued By: Department of Personnel

Approved By: William H. Sorrell, Secretary of Administration

PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT

There are occasions when management must decide if and to what extent State facilities should remain open or be closed during emergencies such as adverse weather conditions, acts of God, equipment breakdown, inoperable bathroom facilities, extreme office temperatures, etc. This policy clarifies who has the authority to make such decisions, and under what circumstances.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The following defines the different types of emergency closing situations that may arise and specifies who has authority to close a State office or facility.

1. Reduced Work Force:

In a reduced work force situation, State offices and facilities are still open for business, but with a reduced level of service. The following are the examples of a reduced work force situation:

- DELAYED OPENING of State offices and facilities.
- EARLY CLOSING of State offices and facilities.
- FULL DAY OF CONTINUED OPERATIONS with a reduced work force. This is most frequently used when one office or facility is closed in the case of fire, malfunctioning furnace, or some other localized emergency.

Employees who are required to remain at work in a reduced work force situation will receive their regular pay plus **compensatory time off at straight time rates** for all hours worked (including overtime). This does not apply to exempt, managerial, confidential, and temporary employees.

Employees who are authorized to be absent will receive their regular pay without charge to their accrued leave balances for the duration of the reduced work force situation.

2. Complete Closing:

The Secretary of Administration may authorize the complete closing of a State office or facility for emergency reasons. In these situations, State offices are closed for business.

Employees who leave the workplace in these situations will receive their regular pay for the time that they are out of the closed office without charging to any leave balances.

Employees who are **required** by management to work during a complete emergency closing will receive **cash for all hours worked while the office or facility is closed, in addition to** the employee's regular pay. This does not apply to exempt, managerial, confidential, and temporary employees.

3. Adverse Weather Conditions:

To reduce driving hazards in severe weather conditions, the Secretary of Administration (with advice from the Agency of Transportation and the Department of Public Safety) may decide to delay the opening of some or all State offices or facilities or to close them early. If a delayed opening situation is decreed or approved by the Secretary of Administration, (s)he will contact Public Safety Headquarters Dispatch who will immediately notify local radio and television stations and ask them to broadcast a delayed opening message as early as possible prior to the normal commuting time of State employees. Employees should be instructed to tune in to their local radio or television stations when the weather is predicted to be adverse. If the State is officially closing, employees will be so notified.

If the Secretary of Administration decides to close State offices early due to adverse weather, (s)he will notify the Commissioner of Personnel who will be responsible for notifying agency/department heads as soon as possible. The electronic mail system (Office Vision) will be utilized to stay in contact with agencies and departments. Personnel officers are encouraged to stay logged on to Office Vision during adverse weather conditions so they may receive timely notification. The Department of Personnel will make calls to those departments who do not have access to Office Vision.

PROCEDURES

1. The Secretary of Administration (or designee) is the person who has the authority to decide on the appropriate response in an emergency situation. Authority may be delegated in the following situations:

- With prior approval of the Secretary of Administration, agency/department heads may be authorized to decide on the appropriate response in any emergency situation, except adverse weather conditions, that affects only that particular agency or department. If the decision is made to close a particular office or facility, the Commissioner of Personnel must be notified immediately.
- With prior approval of the Secretary of Administration, an agency/department head may delegate to his or her district managers or directors the authority to

close or keep open an office or facility in an emergency situation that affects only the district manager's or director's office or district operation.

2. Notification to the Department of Personnel will occur depending on the following circumstances:

- **Weather related**: The State Police Station Commanders will give advice to the Commissioner of Personnel if weather conditions exist for which closing offices or facilities may be appropriate.
- **Other conditions**: Each agency/department must designate someone in each office or facility who must notify the Commissioner of Personnel if other conditions exist (fire, flood, no heat or water, etc.) for which closing offices or facilities may be appropriate.

3. Management must notify employees as soon as practical that a reduced work force situation exists, and must establish the starting and ending times to avoid any confusion and problems in determining benefits, if any, for second and third shift employees.

4. In an extreme emergency (such as a fire), employees should be evacuated immediately and then management should notify the Department of Personnel Employee Relations Division (802-828-3454) of the situation as soon as possible.

5. When an emergency closing is approved, the appointing authority of the affected agency/department must notify the Employee Relations Division of the Department of Personnel, 110 State Street, Drawer 20, Montpelier, VT 05620-3001, in writing within two (2) days of the closing. The notification must include the following information:

- Starting and ending hours of the emergency closing.
- Departments affected (to include address of buildings involved).
- List of employees who were authorized to work during the closing.
- List of employees who were out on approved leave during the closing.

COMPENSATION FOR EMPLOYEES

Employees who are on authorized annual leave, sick leave, personal leave, compensatory time off, or on other paid leave, will not be charged leave time for the period of the emergency closing. The same provisions apply to delayed openings, early closing, or reduced work force situations.

Many employees have different work shift starting and ending times. As a result, a delayed opening or early closing may result in a difference in the amount of time not worked because of the emergency.