

Division of Public Health Administrative Manual

Chapter:	Health and Safety
Title:	Adverse Weather and Emergency Closings
Current Effective Date:	08/25/11
Revision History:	2
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in the event of adverse weather or other emergency situations that may affect the operations of Division of Public Health (DPH) offices/facilities and accounting for employees work time.

POLICY

It is the intent of the DPH to adopt as its guiding reference the Adverse Weather and Emergency Closings Policy found in Section 5 of the State Personnel Manual and Section V of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Policy and Procedure Manual.

DEFINITIONS

Adverse Weather and Other Conditions of a Serious Nature - Conditions that may prohibit some employees from reporting to work but do not necessitate the closing of facilities or curtailing of operations.

Emergency Closing Conditions – Emergency closing conditions necessitate the closing of a state facility, or the curtailing of operations. The conditions that may be hazardous to life or safety and may warrant closing of state offices include:

1. Catastrophic life threatening weather (such as hurricane, tornado, earthquake, flood)
2. Fire
3. Equipment failure
4. Prolonged disruption of power and/or water
5. Contamination by hazardous agents
6. Forced evacuations
7. Acts of actual or potential terrorism

Emergency/Essential Employees - Employees required to work during an emergency because their positions have been designated by management as mandatory and/or essential to agency operations during an emergency.

Administrative Operations - All non-twenty-four hour/seven day per week work units.

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ADVERSE WEATHER PROCEDURES

Unless an adverse weather closing is declared in accordance with this policy, all offices/facilities within the DPH shall remain open during adverse weather or other conditions of a serious nature.

Within Wake County - When adverse weather closing conditions affect more than one administrative operation and occur during the regular work schedule, the Governor or his/her designee shall make the closing decision. When adverse weather closing conditions affect only a DPH location or a DPH location shared with one or more other administrative operations the Division Director or his/her designee shall make the closing decision.

Outside Wake County - When adverse weather conditions exist, the Public Health Division Director or their designee, after communication with the respective Section Chief, shall make the closing decision relative to any office/unit/facility within the DPH.

Note: Declaration of a State of Emergency by the governor or the urging of people to stay off highways by state highway patrol unless absolutely necessary to travel is not the same as declaring closing of state government or curtailing state government operations.

Notification

If adverse weather closing conditions arise during the workday, staff will be notified of the decision to close the office/facility by e-mail, telephone and/or personal notification. If adverse weather closing conditions occur outside of normal work hours, employees will be notified of the decision to close the office/facility by telephone, personal contact and, to the extent possible, by Public Service Announcements in the public media.

The Deputy Division Director of DPH will post an extended absence message on voice mail at (919) 707-5024 for section chiefs and branch heads to access in order to notify their staff. The information will cover the DPH wide operations status and conditions relating to specific DPH facilities. Section chiefs are responsible for notifying their employees. The information will be available as soon as possible, with a target of 6:30 a.m.

When a work location will not be staffed due to adverse weather, but no emergency closing decision has been rendered by the Governor, notifications such as e-mails and telephone messages must not include language indicating the office is closed, but should indicate no one is available to assist/serve, due to adverse weather. This will avoid confusion as to the official status of the workplace and leave accountability. See examples below:

WRONG: Due to adverse weather the XYZ office will be closing at 2:00 PM today.

BETTER: Due to adverse weather, staff of the XYZ office will not be available to assist you after 2:00 PM today. You may leave a message, and we will respond as promptly as possible.

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Ensuring Ongoing Operations

Each work unit should use the main telephone number or a designated number as "message center", with assigned responsibility for staff to retrieve and respond to messages in priority order. The voice mail message should state that the office is open; however, due to adverse weather conditions, there is limited staff available, and all appointments have been cancelled. Each employee is responsible for updating his or her voice mail greeting to indicate availability.

Employee Responsibility

Non Essential Employees - It is the responsibility of employees to make a good faith effort to report to work and/or remain at work during times that adverse weather or other conditions of a serious nature exist. Employees who anticipate problems in their transportation should be permitted and encouraged to avail themselves of adverse weather privileges.

Employees assigned to work in schools, local government buildings, etc. that may be closed by another governing authority during adverse weather should report to another work location, if within a reasonable distance, in order to avoid lost work time. Employees and their supervisor can make the determination with regard to the availability of alternative work site.

If the DPH is open for normal business and travel conditions are questionable in their respective areas, employees are encouraged to use judgment as to whether or not to report to work. Supervisors are to be notified by employees of their decision not to report to work based on adverse weather; otherwise, employees will be expected to report to work.

EMERGENCY CLOSING PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY CLOSING procedures apply when conditions necessitate that normal operations stop as directed by the Governor, department and/or division management.

Emergency/Essential Employees - It is recognized that some operations, during emergency conditions, must continue to provide service. It is the responsibility of the DPH Director to predetermine and designate the mandatory/essential operations that will remain open. Employees who have been designated in this category must remain and report to work as scheduled or the following may apply:

1. If an employee assigned to an emergency/essential position fails to report to work, or remain at work, this may result in disciplinary action and/or the hours missed to be charged to leave with or without pay, as appropriate.
2. When conditions cause an emergency employee to arrive late, the supervisor may determine that conditions justified the late arrival. In such cases, the lost time will not be charged to the employees leave balances or to leave without pay, and no disciplinary action will be taken.

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Emergency/Essential Personnel - The DPH has designated the following as emergency essential personnel:

1. State Health Director
2. Deputy State Health Director
3. Deputy Division Director
4. Section Chief, Epidemiology
5. Chief, Public Health Nursing
6. Chief, Legal Affairs
7. Information Technology Manager
8. State Laboratory Director
9. Chief Medical Examiner
10. Section Chief, Women's and Children's Health

Supervisory Responsibility

When adverse weather or other conditions of a serious nature exist, keep employees informed of their options to avail themselves of Adverse Weather Leave and their responsibility to account for leave taken in accordance with established policy.

If situations arise that may warrant an emergency closing, notify the Section Chief immediately of the conditions and seek further guidance.

If a work location is closed due to an emergency condition that affects that single location, reassign staff to another location to the extent possible to continue uninterrupted service delivery.

If a work location(s) is closed under the Emergency Closing policy, the supervisor/manager must provide the following information to the Division of Human Resources (DHR) Manager within 48 hours. The DHR Manager must provide this information to DHHS/Safety and Benefits Sections within the same 48 hours period:

1. Reason for closure
2. Time period of closure
3. Location(s) of closure
4. Number of employees affected (Report only those employees denied the opportunity to work. Do not report employees who worked at other locations or were on pre-arranged leave during the period of closure.)

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Leave Accountability

Adverse Weather - Work time missed may be charged to annual or bonus leave or it may be made up with supervisory approval within twelve months of occurrences.

Employees subject to the provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act should not work in excess of 40 hours per week in order to make up adverse weather time. Supervisors should schedule adverse weather make up hours during a week in which there is a state holiday or when the employee has/will utilize vacation, bonus or sick leave, etc. (Please note that supervisor may authorize overtime when workload merits the non-exempt employee's services beyond the scheduled workday. The time worked could then be credited as time and one-half toward compensatory time which may be applied towards adverse weather time. Appropriate documentation for overtime hours to be used must be accompanied by specific work deliverables, i.e. bona fide need.)

Emergency Closing - In the event of an emergency closing, an employee is deprived of the opportunity to work due to the decision to close the work location. Work time missed under these circumstances does not have to be made up. However, the following shall apply:

1. Employees on pre-arranged/pre-approved sick or annual leave during an emergency closing will stay on leave for their absence.
2. Employees who elect to utilize adverse weather leave for a portion of a day prior to a decision to close the work location due to emergency conditions will still be responsible to charge leave or make up the work time missed prior to the actual closing of the work location.
3. Employees scheduled to work at another location (not affected by emergency conditions) are responsible to work or charge time missed to appropriate leave.

For questions or clarification regarding the implementation and administration of this policy please contact the DHR Manager.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

09/04/07: Initial Approval Date

01/28/10: Revision 1

08/25/11: Revision 2