
PERSONNEL POLICY: SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY POLICY
December 10, 2019

(This Policy replaces the Pay Policy for Time Not Worked Because of Snowstorms,
Natural Disasters or Civil Emergencies dated 1/08/2012)

— Purpose —

City employees are expected to make every effort to report to work every day and to serve the public even during severe weather emergencies. However, we recognize that there may be severe weather emergency conditions that create the potential of endangering the general health and safety of employees, their families, and the public. When such conditions exist, the City's ability to effectively and safely maintain operations and deliver services may be compromised. This may result in delays or the suspension of nonessential services as determined by the appropriate authority.

The purpose of this Severe Weather Emergency Policy is to prescribe the procedures associated with a declaration of a severe weather emergency by the Mayor. This policy documents the authority and discretion given to the Department Heads in relation to the continuity of departmental operations during such an extreme weather emergency. This policy also establishes options for employees during severe weather emergencies and the treatment of employee absences from work during a severe weather emergency.

DECLARATION OF A SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Works and the Commissioner of Health, is responsible for declaring a severe weather emergency. Severe inclement weather is defined as weather that is so severe that it has the potential to result in damage, loss of human life and/or the creation of hazardous conditions. This declaration means that Department Heads are authorized to determine what nonessential City services may be delayed or suspended in the interest of protecting the safety of employees and the public. A severe weather emergency may include:

Extreme Cold Event – a weather condition with excessively low temperatures or a combination of cold temperatures and wind that has the potential to cause cold-related illnesses or injuries. An extreme cold event is defined in hours, a day or series of days when the minimum temperature or wind chill is forecasted to be approximately -5°F or lower.

Wind Chill Advisory - In Wisconsin wind chill advisories are issued when wind chill temperatures are forecasted to range from -10°F to -24°F.

Wind Chill Warning – Wind chill conditions that are life threatening. In Wisconsin wind chill warnings are issued when wind chill temperatures are forecasted to be below -25F.

NONESSENTIAL SERVICES

During a severe weather emergency nonessential services as identified by the appropriate authority may be delayed or suspended. Nonessential services shall be identified by each Department Head either in advance or as a result of an anticipated specific weather emergency. Nonessential services and staff include general city positions that are not directly involved in the City's response to the severe weather emergency and public safety personnel and first responders. Under this policy, the Fire Chief and the Chief of Police have full discretion in determining the applicability of this policy in relation to members in their respective departments.

COMMUNICATION OF A SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY DECLARATION

A declaration of a severe weather emergency will be made by the Mayor and communicated to all Department Heads as soon as practicable after consultation with the proper authorities. Department Heads and designees shall develop and implement internal and external communication systems and protocols to ensure that information regarding departmental operations during the severe weather event is disseminated to employees, the public, and other key stakeholders in an effective and timely manner.

Information regarding departmental operations during the extreme weather event should be communicated with employees via text, phone call, email, voicemail recording from a general department number and/or by posting a message on the department's web page or social media platforms. Information should also be disseminated via local media outlets including TMJ4, FOX 6 Milwaukee, WISN 12; and radio 620.

DEPARTMENT HEADS DISCRETION

A declaration of a severe weather emergency by the Mayor means that Department Heads have discretion to make operations and service delivery determinations to ensure the safety of employees and the community we serve. Those determinations may include:

- (1) hours of operation for the day and activities and programs that may be delayed, postponed, or canceled due to the extreme weather;
- (2) availability of alternate work assignments for field employees and other employees who are unable to perform their regular work assignments due to the extreme weather;
- (3) availability of alternate work locations if assigned location is not available; and,
- (4) the circumstances when the severe weather emergency warrants a complete shutdown of all departmental operations.

The Commissioner of Public Works, consistent with authority granted under MCC 7-04, may determine the availability and safe occupancy of public buildings during a severe weather event. The Department of Employee Relations will determine the applicability of this policy when, as determined by the Public Works Commissioner, a public building is not safe to occupy.

A SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY DECLARATION AND THE IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

A declaration of extreme weather emergency by the Mayor means that non-essential service personnel may be allowed to determine, using reasonable judgement, whether traveling to work and reporting to work is unsafe. Department Heads should carefully consider employee requests to be excused during the extreme weather emergency due to safety concerns.

An employee who reasonably determines that travel is not safe will not be subject to discipline for not reporting to work during the extreme weather event provided that they follow departmental call in procedures. Supervisors are expected to honor the reasonable requests of employees to arrive late or to leave early because of the extreme weather emergency.

When departmental activities are delayed or suspended, employees may be allowed to work at the discretion of the Department Head. This may include working on site, at an alternate work location or from home. In all circumstances when employees are approved to work under this provision, managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- all timekeeping and payroll-related records are accurate;
- the level and quality of customer service is maintained;
- resources are utilized efficiently; and,
- the necessary technology, productivity, and security considerations are addressed.

Employees may also be allowed to work additional hours during the work week to make up the time or simply use paid time off (vacation, compensatory time, or sick leave control incentive hours). Employees who don't have access to vacation hours should be allowed to borrow vacation hours consistent with provisions of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

Employees, except for FLSA exempt employees, may also take the time off without pay. Under no circumstances can an FLSA exempt employee be allowed to go to unpaid status during the severe weather emergency.

When a Department Head suspends all non-essential departmental operations and employees are directed not to report to work, employees shall be compensated at their base salary rate for their regularly scheduled work day. This includes employees who had been scheduled to be off for the day. Such hours paid but not worked will not count towards hours worked for purposes of overtime.

The Office of the Comptroller shall develop and establish record keeping practices for payroll and related functions to assure compliance with this policy and other applicable federal and state regulations.