



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

SECTION: 200 – General Administration	POLICY#: 201
TITLE: Facility Closure or Curtailment Due to Hazardous Conditions	R & O #: 98 - 221
	IMPLEMENTED BY PROCEDURE #: 201-A
SPONSORING DEPT/DIV: County Administrative Office	
ADOPTED: 12/08/1998	REVISED: 12/13/2022

PURPOSE:

Washington County is committed to providing quality and cost-effective public services to meet the needs of our community, including many mandatory and emergency-related functions, in all types of weather and other hazardous conditions. The purpose of this policy and associated procedure is to inform employees of their work-related responsibilities and options during hazardous conditions.

DEFINITIONS:

Curtailment: The reduction, limitation, or suspension of normal operations within a County facility when the facility is otherwise open (i.e., not closed). This may involve canceling or rescheduling meetings and/or public appointments or adjusting normal operating hours and staffing levels.

Essential Functions/Services: Mission-critical operations, processes, or legally mandated tasks of the County that cannot be interrupted or suspended without significant consequences for public safety or the continuity of government affairs. These services include, but are not limited to, law enforcement, road operations, emergency management (including staffing of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and/or Department Operation Center (DOC)(s)), emergency-related internal support services and operation of 24-hour facilities (such as the jail, corrections center, animal shelter, and juvenile shelter).

Facility Closure: The official closing of a County facility by the County Administrator or designee to both employees and the public if the facility is no longer physically accessible, it cannot support operations (due to lack of power, heating, and so forth), travel to or from the facility is unsafe for the public or employees or other similar circumstances exist.

Hazardous Conditions: Conditions as determined by the County Administrator or designee, with data and input from subject matter experts, such as wind, snow, icy conditions, heavy rain,

flooding, excessive heat, hazardous air quality, disease outbreak, and other incidents that impede an employee's ability to safely travel to or from the workplace and/or perform work in a safe manner, as well as the public's ability to safely access County services.

Public Closure: The official closing of a County facility by the County Administrator or designee only to the public if the facility cannot support operations to serve the community (due to lack of power, cooling, heating, and so forth), travel to or from the facility is unsafe for the public or other similar circumstances exist. Employees may be asked to report to work during a Public Closure.

Normal Operations: County operations functioning at a regular level, including service levels, activities, and functions of any office, department, or division.

GENERAL POLICY:

Washington County provides a wide array of services, many of which are essential in that they must be staffed during hazardous conditions and other emergent events. In deference to these diverse and essential service requirements, and the significant number of employees performing these functions, it is the County's general policy to keep facilities open or continue to provide service to the community in an alternate way during periods of hazardous conditions. Although a County facility is open, services and staffing levels operating out of the facility may be temporarily curtailed.

Sections of this Policy would not apply to employees who currently fall under a County Collective Bargaining Agreement that specifically contradicts this policy. Any section or circumstance not specifically covered in the collective bargaining agreement shall be governed by this policy.

POLICY GUIDELINES:

1. Responsibilities

The Board of County Commissioners has formally delegated authority to the County Administrator to promulgate and enforce a policy governing reporting for work, adjusting schedules and compensation, closing workplaces and such other matters as may be necessary in the event of hazardous conditions which may interfere with the normal operations of the County (RO 98-221).

2. General Provisions

When hazardous conditions exist and County facilities are open, all scheduled employees will make a good-faith effort to report to work, including when there are hazardous conditions. Employees should allow for sufficient travel time, use alternate routes or methods of transportation, and/or work remotely (with prior approval) as appropriate for each employee's classification.

In some cases, managers may curtail operations in coordination with the County Administrative Office. A County facility will be considered closed if, in the view of the County Administrator or designee, it is no longer physically accessible, it cannot support operations (due to lack of power, heating and so forth), and/or travel to or from the facility or working conditions are unsafe for the public or employees.

3. Curtailment

Department directors and managers may deviate from normal operations (curtailment) during hazardous conditions in coordination with the County Administrative Office. This may involve:

- Canceling or rescheduling meetings and/or public appointments,
- Adjusting normal operations, and
- Modifying staffing levels or offering telecommuting options.

During a curtailment, the facility in which the program operates would remain open and employees would be expected to report to work unless other arrangements are made with their supervisor. An employee who is unable to report to work is subject to the provisions of Sections 3.1 - 3.5 below.

3.1. Timekeeping

When a County building is open and a scheduled employee is unable to report to work because of hazardous conditions and has not made other work arrangements with their supervisor, the employee shall either use earned paid leave (such as compensatory time, vacation leave, administrative leave, or floating holiday) or request leave without pay if no paid accruals are available. Use of sick leave will not be authorized because an employee is unable to report to work due to hazardous conditions.

3.2. Inability to Report to Work

A scheduled employee who is unable to report to work due to hazardous conditions shall notify their immediate supervisor or manager as soon as practical.

3.3. Request for Alternative Work Schedule

An employee may request to report to work at a later time and/or leave early due to hazardous conditions. Such a request shall be made as soon as practical to the immediate supervisor or manager who will follow [Policy 310 Alternative Work Schedules](#) when deciding whether to grant such a request. Work time missed will be charged to the employee's earned paid leave or leave without pay as appropriate per Article 6.3.1 of the Personnel Rules and Regulations. Employees who are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) shall not be required to use leave in this situation if they perform at least four (4) hours of work on the day in question consistent with the requirements of

the Management, Administrative and Professional Personnel (MAPPS) policy.

3.4. Request to Make Up Work

An FLSA Non-Exempt employee may request to make up work missed due to hazardous conditions during the same 40-hour workweek. Approval is at the sole discretion of the immediate supervisor or manager. Hours not made up will be charged to the employee's earned paid leave or leave without pay as appropriate.

3.5. Request to Telecommute

An employee may request to telecommute or otherwise work remotely during a hazardous conditions event. The employee's immediate supervisor or manager will follow [Policy 311 Telecommuting/Remote Work](#) in deciding whether to grant such a request. An employee authorized to work remotely is expected to follow through and complete a regular workday from their alternate work location regardless of any subsequent curtailment or closure decisions made by the County.

4. Closure

The County Administrator or designee has the authority to close a facility and inform employees, the media, and members of the public that a facility is closed.

4.1. Closure During a Workday

Should it become necessary for the County Administrator to close a facility during the standard workday, supervisors shall attempt to make alternate arrangements for affected employees to continue work. This may include the following:

- 4.1.1. Reassigning affected employees to other facilities occupied by the same department or office;
- 4.1.2. Allowing telecommuting from home or another safe and remote location; or
- 4.1.3. Giving a short-term assignment to another County location or department.

If there are no suitable alternatives, the supervisor may dismiss the affected employees with pay for the remainder of the employees' regularly scheduled shifts.

If the decision to close a facility occurs after an employee has left work, if an employee did not report to work, or if the employee was already telecommuting, the employee shall remain in the status they were in prior to the closure and for the duration of their workday. For example, if an employee is telecommuting and the facility they normally report to closes, the employee is expected to continue to telecommute for the remainder of their normal workday; or, if an employee previously chose to utilize accrued leave prior to the closure the employee will continue to use accrued leave.

4.2. Closure Prior to the Workday

In some situations, it may be necessary for the County Administrator or designee to close a County facility prior to the beginning of a scheduled workday. In such circumstances, efforts will be made to notify employees of the closure prior to the start of their work shift. Notice of closures may include announcements on the County website, County email, County social media feeds, local news media, Everbridge, notification by supervisors, and through other methods. It is the employee's responsibility to verify if a facility has been closed by utilizing one or more of the communication tools listed above.

As much as possible, supervisors are expected to communicate with their staff prior to any hazardous condition occurring if the employee's position requires them to report to work regardless of hazardous conditions. Supervisors should collaborate with employees if needed in advance of any event to help develop plans for reporting to work when hazardous conditions exist.

If a facility is closed prior to the beginning of the workday, supervisors shall direct affected employees who do not serve in a position that provides an essential function to do one of the following:

- 4.2.1. Reassign the affected employees to other work within their department or office at another facility; or
- 4.2.2. Telecommute from home or another safe and remote location. If the employee cannot conduct their regular work through telecommuting, assign department or Countywide training or education related to emergency preparedness; equity, diversity, and inclusion; wellness; or similar activities supportive of the County's mission.

In the rare event that no other option is available, an employee is unable to take part in work or any type of training, and a request to make up missed hours during the same pay period is not applicable, then the employee must draw from their accrued leave, such as compensatory time, vacation leave, administrative leave, and/or floating holiday.

5. Implementation

Elected officials, department directors, managers, and supervisors are expected to be knowledgeable of, and shall be responsible for, implementing this policy fairly and equitably to all staff within their respective departments and offices. Managers and supervisors are expected to pre-plan work or training for all employees in the event of a facility curtailment or closure. Observance of this policy is mandatory for all County employees and violation may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

6. Review

This policy shall be reviewed by the County Administrative Office at least every three years, or more often if needed, and updated, as necessary.

7. Resources

- 7.1. [Policy 310: Alternative Work Schedules](#)
- 7.2. [Policy 311: Telecommuting/Remote Work](#)
- 7.3. [Procedure 201-A: Hazardous Conditions](#)