



Emergency Alert and Dismissal Plan FY2017

SECTION I - POLICY

The following establishes a uniform policy, guidance and procedures for advising agency heads of emergency information, dismissal due to building closure or evacuation, and/or shelter in place of Federal employees in the immediate Chicago area during emergency situations.

Emergency situations as defined by this plan are those of sufficient magnitude so as to present a hazard or danger to the health or safety of Federal employees. Situations are confined to those involving Government agencies as a whole, and do not focus on individuals.

Regardless of the situation, the Co-Chairs of the Emergency Preparedness and Advisory Committee (EPAC), after consulting with local public safety officials, will confer with the group of agency officials who form the Emergency Preparedness and Advisory Committee to consider appropriate action. When the need arises, the Co-Chairs of the EPAC will e-mail the agency officials indicating that a decision is pending regarding the appropriate guidance to follow in response to an emergency situation. If, in the judgment of the Co-Chairs, it is impossible or impractical to obtain such advice from public safety officials and the EPAC, they will act after conferring with each other. If one of the Co-Chairs is absent, the other Co-Chair will act in his/her stead.

FEB EPAC guidance is a recommendation, with the ultimate decision to allow early departure or late arrival reserved for the agency head or the supervisor of each agency.

Agencies are strongly encouraged to give special weight to the advisory when making decisions. The Regional Transportation Authority has indicated that neither the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), nor the commuter railroads (METRA) can adjust capacity to handle early dismissals. Therefore, while an early release may be a benefit to those who depend upon private transportation, that benefit must be weighed carefully when making a decision for early dismissal.

Agencies located in areas outside the main business center of Chicago may or may not be directly affected by the emergency situation. The agency heads in those locations should use their own discretion regarding the need for an early dismissal of employees. If locations outside the Chicago business district are affected, fact-specific guidance will be provided at the time of the emergency notification.

SECTION II - OPTIONS FOR AGENCY LEADERSHIP

For notice events, such as weather-related situations where GSA has not closed the building, the local agency head has full discretion to determine the appropriate response. The decision concerning early dismissal is one that must balance concerns for employee safety with the obligation to deliver programs critical to the Agency's mission. Agency directors have the following options:

1. Telework – Employees can work from home or at telework centers.
2. Alternative Work Schedules – Employees can change their AWS day or work longer hours and fewer days.
3. Delayed Start Time – Employees can come in later and leave later to avoid peak weather severity and/or to allow more time for commuting.
4. Unscheduled Leave – Employees can be granted unscheduled annual leave or leave without pay (LWOP). **For most weather-related situations, unscheduled leave (formerly known as liberal leave) will be the default policy**
5. Adjusted Early Dismissal – Employees may be dismissed early by a set number of hours (usually 2 hours) relative to their normal departure time.
6. Excused Absence / Administrative Leave – supervisors may excuse for a period not to exceed 59 minutes¹ on any day for non-routine absence and in accordance with the Agency's Leave Policy. Additional administrative leave can be granted during severe conditions and in accordance with the agency's policies on granting administrative leave.

NOTE: Early Dismissal – To the extent possible, Agency heads should consider the use of “adjusted early dismissals.” An adjusted dismissal allows employees to leave work early relative to their normal departure, based on the time they arrived. For example, if a two-hour dismissal is approved, employees would depart two hours earlier than their normally scheduled departure time. This prevents a situation where all employees in the Federal complex are released at the same time.

¹ Per CFR § 630.206 **Minimum charge.** (a) Unless an agency establishes a minimum charge of less than one hour, or establishes a different minimum charge through negotiations, the minimum charge for leave is one hour, and additional charges are in multiples thereof. If an employee is unavoidably or necessarily absent for less than one hour, or tardy, the agency, for adequate reason, may excuse him without charge to leave.

SECTION III - EMERGENCY TYPES

Notice Events (Including Most Hazardous Weather Conditions)

For events where advanced notice is available, an EPAC committee meeting will be called or an electronically proposed action will be sent for vote.

For weather specific events, the Meteorologist-in-Charge, National Weather Service Forecast Office, will notify the Executive Director of the Federal Executive Board and Manager of Chicago Oversight for the Office of Personnel Management when there is a 70 percent or greater probability of severe weather of sufficient magnitude to cause serious and hazardous conditions dangerous to the health and safety of Federal employees.

No Notice Events

Included are unforeseen events having adverse impact on operations or presenting a dangerous environment, including, but not limited to, power failures involving Government agencies as a whole, acts of terrorism, civil disobedience, riots, fire, transportation strikes, etc. The foregoing types of situations may vary in their intensity and the area affected. The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Preparedness and Advisory Committee should be notified by an appropriate official of any agency when, in that official's judgment, a situation involves Government agencies as a whole and is of sufficient magnitude to jeopardize the health and safety of Federal employees. Either the early dismissal plan or the off-hours notification plan described in Section II will be invoked, as appropriate.

SECTION IV – PROCEDURES

Agency Responsibilities

Each agency head is urged to develop, and communicate to employees its leave policies, those employees who are designated to perform emergency services, and internal policies and procedures to be followed in case of:

1. Emergencies (such as natural disaster, etc.)
2. Evacuations (caused by fire, flooding, pandemic, etc.)
3. Shelter-in-place (in response to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents)

At least annually, agencies should provide written procedures for such emergencies to employees working in the Chicago area. The notice should tell employees how they will be notified and include the text of any media announcements to be used and a detailed explanation of their meaning. ***The notice also should explain how an employee should contact their employer during an emergency. For instance, the notice would state that*** if an "unscheduled leave" policy is announced, employees must contact their agencies to request to use annual leave, leave without pay, and/or previously earned compensatory time off or credit hours. As a general policy, if an "early dismissal" is announced, personnel should not be charged annual leave for the excused period unless already scheduled for a full workday of leave

At least annually, agencies should identify emergency personnel and notify them in writing that they are designated as "emergency employees." The term "emergency employee" is used to designate those employees who must report for work in emergency situations. The notice should include the requirement that "emergency employees" report for, or remain at work in emergency situations, and an explanation that dismissal or closure announcements do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise. Agencies must be careful to designate which employees are "emergency employees" for the purpose of notice events such as adverse weather conditions and other emergency situations. If an agency determines that a situation requires employees other than those who are designated as "emergency employees" to report for, or remain at, work during an emergency, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.

Agencies are responsible for determining closure, dismissal, and leave policies for employees on shift work and alternative work schedules (i.e. flexible or compressed work schedules) and for informing employees of these policies.

Notice Event Recommendations

Information to all Federal Government agencies in the Chicago area will be initiated by the Co-Chairs of the Emergency Preparedness and Advisory Committee. Upon determination that an emergency situation warrants notice and a decision is made as to a recommendation of Unscheduled Leave/Telework; early dismissal/delayed arrival; or the closure of Agency offices, the following will occur:

1. The Chicago Federal Executive Board Emergency Notification System will be activated sending a voice and email to all agency heads and their designated emergency backups.
2. An advisory message will be placed on the FEB 24-hour hotline: 312-353-9463 (WIND).

In the event that a situation appears to be serious enough to warrant consideration for early dismissal, yet a decision to stay open is made, then an advisory message to that effect will be issued through these channels of communication.

Off-Hours Notification

If the emergency situation develops during off-duty hours, it may be necessary for all Federal employees, except those providing emergency services, to not report to work. Under such circumstances, the Co-Chairs of the Emergency Preparedness and Advisory Committee will initiate the following: The Chicago Federal Executive Board Emergency Notification System will be activated sending a voice and email to all agency heads and their designated emergency backups.

1. The Chicago Federal Executive Board Emergency Notification System will be activated sending a voice and email to all agency heads and their designated emergency backups.
2. An advisory message will be placed on the FEB 24-hour hotline

Each agency head will be provided with the 24-hour hotline telephone number, which can be called to obtain the announcement directly from the FEB. The message will give further details of the conditions upon which the decision was based. Agency, installation, and office heads will then disseminate the information to their employees through whatever internal agency procedures have already been established.

Since agencies located in areas outside of the main business section of Chicago may or may not be directly affected by the emergency situation, or may have different emergency or traffic conditions, they should develop internal instructions for how their employees should respond. Agencies also should provide internal instructions for those employees engaged in emergency services that cannot be suspended.