

CHAPTER 33

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS & SEVERE CONDITIONS

3301 Purpose. This policy establishes the procedure for suspension of normal operations due to emergency closings such as severe weather affecting St. Mary's County Government.

3302 Policy. The County recognizes that certain emergency conditions may arise that require the County to close or delay the opening of its offices. Due to the unique nature of county government, all cancellations or delays shall be coordinated with the Courts and State Operations and approved by the County Administrator. This could result in shortening or cancellation of a scheduled work day for departments that do not operate on a twenty-four hour basis or that are not involved in the resolution of the declared emergency.

3303 Scope. This policy may be applied wholly or in part in the event that a single entity (department, building, etc.) is solely affected. For example, if a building is flooded, loses power or is deemed temporarily uninhabitable, the County Administrator may elect to close that building only. In such a case the County Declared Emergency Closing Pay Policy would apply only to the affected employees.

County declared emergencies should not be viewed as a benefit to which employees are entitled, but rather as an act undertaken by the County Administration in the interests of employee safety.

3304 Definitions.

- (a) **Delayed Opening.** The pre-designated time for opening of normal business for St. Mary's County Government is delayed to the later time.
- (b) **Closure of Government.** An approved closure of all St. Mary's County departments not affected by the incident causing the closure.
- (c) **Liberal Leave.** An authorized absence from the duty station for identified County employees.
- (d) **Operational Code.** A series of codes (i.e.: delayed opening; closure of government; liberal leave) designed to describe the operational status of St. Mary's County Government and employees' responsibilities to duty.
- (e) **Severe Weather.** Storm conditions that may present a threat to life and/or property in St. Mary's County. Severe weather includes, but is not limited to snowstorm; ice storm; hurricane; tornado; flooding; and extreme heat or cold conditions.
- (f) **Essential Personnel.** St. Mary's County department employees whose positions are required to maintain strategic services, as designated by the department head. (Reference the Emergency Operations Manual for additional information.)
- (g) **Telephone Tree.** An organized listing maintained by each department head used to contact and inform its employees of work status due to the current storm condition. Information includes, but is not limited to: home telephone; work telephone; telephone pager; and cell phone.

- (h) Media Alert Plan. An operational plan maintained by the Public Information Officer to notify the public of the operational status of St. Mary's County Government.
- (i) Employee Alert Plan. An organized alerting plan maintained by the St. Mary's County Public Information Officer to notify each department head of the operational status of St. Mary's County Government due to the storm condition.

3305 Procedures and Responsibilities.

- (a) Open during regular business hours. Departments that are open for regular business hours but do not operate on a twenty-four hour basis are to adhere to the following procedures:
 - (1) When the closure is announced before the start of the workday, administrative leave shall be awarded for the emergency closing of the normal workday. Any employee who is not scheduled to work that day or has pre-approved leave shall not be eligible for administrative leave.
 - (2) If a delayed opening or early closure is announced, employees who report for work shall be paid administrative leave for the balance of the hours not worked in their normal workday. Employees who do not report for work shall be charged leave for their regularly scheduled hours.

For example, if County offices open at 10:30 a.m. and close at 4:30 p.m. and an employee does not come to work, the individual will be charged eight (8) hours of leave for the entire day while an employee who came to work would be paid for 5 regular hours and 3 hours of administrative leave.
 - (3) If an employee arrives after or leaves before the official County closure, the employee shall be charged leave for the time not worked and shall not be eligible for administrative leave for the remainder of the day. For example, if an employee is at work and requests to leave early, they shall be charged leave for the remainder of the day and shall be ineligible for administrative leave if the County declares an early closure.
 - (4) Those non-exempt or exempt employees called in or required to remain at work by their department head as essential personnel, while other employees are on administrative leave, shall be compensated at 2 (two) times their regular rate of pay (referred to as Emergency Closing Premium Pay).
 - (5) Nonexempt employees who voluntarily arrive earlier or leave after the times designated shall not receive more than eight (8) hours in pay for working their normally scheduled work hours. However, pre-approved overtime or compensatory time for working more than 40 hours in a week shall be paid in accordance with policy.
- (b) Open on a 24/7 basis. Employees working in positions that are scheduled on a twenty-four hour and seven days per week basis shall be paid Emergency Closing Premium pay for all regularly scheduled hours worked during any emergency closing. Employees required to remain at work in excess of their regularly scheduled hours or who are called in to assist with the emergency shall be compensated at 2 (two) times their regular rate of pay (Emergency Closing Premium Pay).

3306 Severe Weather Operations Codes. The Severe Weather Alert and Action Plan affects all St. Mary's County Government operations and employees and shall be coordinated with Courts and State Operations.

(a) Notifications. Notifications shall be made by the Public Information Officer to the following:

- (1) Television stations. WRC-Channel 4, Fox-Channel 5, ABC-Channel 7, CBS-Channel 9, Metro Cast Channel 10, and St. Mary's County Channel 95; and
- (2) Radio stations. WMDM FM 97.7, WSMD Star FM 98.3, WKIK FM 102.9, WGRQ FM 95.9
- (3) Telephone. A special telephone number (301-475-4200 extension 1344) is available and maintained by the Public Information Officer to keep employees informed of the County's operational status.
- (4) Website. The operational status shall also be posted on County's official web site at www.stmarysmd.com.

It is the employee's responsibility to verify the County's operational status during inclement weather. Departments may utilize a telephone tree to ensure that all employees are notified of the operational status.

(b) The following codes are used for identifying the operational status of St. Mary's County Government.

- (1) Delayed Opening. This shall provide employees a safe time for travel to allow for current hazardous storm conditions. Non-essential employees may delay their arrival to the work location. Essential employees are required to report to their work site in accordance with their Department Operational Plan.
- (2) Liberal Leave. Non-essential St. Mary's County employees may use annual, personal or compensatory leave in lieu of working the day. Employees shall notify their supervisor when using the leave. Essential employees are required to report to work.
- (3) County Government Closure. This operational status includes closure during the normal workday and prior to the beginning of the workday. All **non-essential** St. Mary's County employees shall be excused from attending work for the day identified. **Essential** employees are required to report to work in accordance with their department's work plan.

(c) Essential Departments/Employees.

- (1) Open During Regular Business Hours. Certain departments which are normally only open during regular business hours and employees within such departments may be designated as essential due to the need to provide certain strategic services to the citizens of St. Mary's County. Such departments shall develop a minimal staffing level plan required to provide the necessary coverage for emergency events. This plan shall be forwarded to and approved by the County Administrator. Once approved, a copy of the plan shall be provided to the Departments of Finance and Human Resources by the County Administrator.

Positions may be designated by the department head as essential depending on the severity and type of event:

Each department head shall consider the emergency situation to determine which, if any, departmental employees shall be deemed essential.