

**Subject: Policy on Authorized Closings**

1. Purpose ..... 1

2. Policy ..... 1

    2.1 Authorized Closings ..... 2

        2.1.1 Office or Department Closings for Safety or Health Risk ..... 2

    2.2 Determination of Emergency Personnel ..... 3

    2.3 Compensation For All-Day Closings (All Classified and University Staff Salaried Employees) ..... 3

        2.3.1 Non-Emergency Personnel ..... 3

        2.3.2 Emergency Personnel ..... 4

    2.4 Compensation For Early Closings or Late Openings (All Classified and University Staff Salaried Employees) ..... 4

        2.4.1 Non-Emergency Personnel on Partial Day Closing ..... 4

        2.4.2 Emergency Personnel on Partial Day Closing ..... 5

    2.5 Transportation Difficulties (No Agency Closing) ..... 5

    2.6 Other Applications of Policy ..... 5

        2.6.1 Hourly Wage Employees ..... 5

        2.6.2 Scheduled Days Off ..... 5

        2.6.3 Closing on Employee’s Day of Original Appointment ..... 5

        2.6.4 Employees on Approved Leave ..... 6

        2.6.5 Holidays ..... 6

    2.7 Policy Exception ..... 6

3. Procedures ..... 6

    3.1 Communication Plan - Authorized Closing for Inclement Weather ..... 6

        3.1.1 Supervisor and Employee Responsibilities ..... 7

        3.1.2 Supervisor Assistance to Employees ..... 7

        3.1.3 Employee Communication with Supervisors ..... 7

        3.1.4 If the Employee Has No Leave Balances to Cover Missed Hours ..... 7

        On-Campus ..... 7

        3.1.5 Off-Campus ..... 8

4. Definitions ..... 9

5. References ..... 9

6. Approval and Revisions ..... 9

**1. Purpose**

This policy defines the process followed when the university is affected by inclement weather, natural disasters, emergencies and other conditions that may cause operations to be suspended or curtailed. It deals with announcements of closings and how employees are to charge time off.

This policy is formulated under the authority delegated to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and will be applied independent of decisions by other state agencies.

The provisions of this policy apply to all university employees.

**2. Policy**

It is the policy of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to operate in accordance with its approved university calendar and to maintain full operations unless specifically closed by the Vice President for Administrative Services in consultation with the Senior Vice President and University Provost. All authorized

closings resulting from inclement weather, natural disasters, or emergency conditions will be announced through the Communication Plan described in this policy. Non-emergency personnel, who anticipate transportation difficulties due to inclement weather conditions when the university is not closed, are urged to seek permission from supervisors to shorten their normal work shift through the use of accrued leave. Supervisors should make every effort to accommodate these requests.

Teaching faculty are expected to meet all regularly scheduled classes unless an authorized closing has been announced. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to contact the department and to follow departmental procedures if they are unable to meet their class when the university is officially open. See Section 4.6.2 of the [Faculty Handbook](#).

## 2.1 Authorized Closings

When the university is affected by inclement weather, a natural disaster, or other emergency, classes may be canceled or operations of the university officially suspended. Such authorized closings may be for an entire or partial day or shift. Non-emergency personnel are not required to work during an authorized closing. Such periods of leave should be reported as Inclement Weather (IW). Decisions to close will be made as follows:

### 1. The Blacksburg Campus and Facilities in the Immediate Blacksburg Area (Excluding Off-Campus Extension)

The decision to cancel classes will be made by the Senior Vice President and University Provost or, in his absence, the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education. The decision to close all university operations on the Blacksburg campus and facilities in the immediate Blacksburg area will be made by the Vice President for Administrative Services or, in his absence, the Senior Vice President and University Provost in consultation with the Vice President for Finance, making the announcement in accordance with the Communication Plan.

### 2. Extension Facilities (Off-Campus)

Decisions to close off-campus extension facilities will be made by the district and unit directors for their respective areas.

### 3. Research, Continuing Education, and Other Facilities (Off-Campus)

The facility director will make decisions to close operations at off-campus research and continuing education facilities.

When authorized closings occur for emergencies other than inclement weather, or natural disaster, emergency personnel will be designated on a case-by-case basis. Employees will be compensated as documented below.

#### 2.1.1 Office or Department Closings for Safety or Health Risk

If a department head thinks that an office or department should be closed because of safety or health risks to employees or the public, the Environmental Health and Safety Services Department should be contacted for a recommendation. A recommendation to close an office should be forwarded to the appropriate dean or vice president for approval. After normal work hours, supervisors should contact the on-duty shift commander in the Virginia Tech Police Department to discuss safety or health risks that may necessitate the closing of an office or department. If it is determined that the office should be closed due to safety or health risk and no other reasonable options have been identified, the employee will be compensated for those hours of closing. For any other situations, contact Virginia Tech Department of Human Resources to determine the appropriate course of action.

For office or building situations when the work environment is uncomfortable but does not pose identifiable health or safety hazards, supervisors may authorize employees to use the appropriate type of leave without approval from executive level administration. Employees may use applicable accrued leave. Wage employees are not compensated

for time not worked. Supervisors may also consider temporarily reassigning the employees to other work areas; allow employees to work at home under [Policy 4325, Telecommuting Guidelines](#); or change the work schedule under [Policy 4300, Hours of Work](#), if it can be done reasonably.

## 2.2 Determination of Emergency Personnel

It is the responsibility of administration to inform employees designated as emergency personnel that they will be required to work during authorized closings.

1. Departments should also notify employees annually just prior to the winter season, when specific storm activity is anticipated, or when it can be predetermined that for certain types of emergencies these employees' services will be necessary.
2. Applicants, at the time of the interview, should be informed if the position is designated as *emergency personnel*. This information is referenced on the *Interview Information Guide* that accompanies the application referrals to the department. In addition, a paragraph informing the selected candidate of the emergency designation is included in the [Sample Letters of Offer](#) or wage and salaried positions.
3. It is recognized that occasionally *non-emergency* personnel may become *emergency* and vice versa. Administrators should attempt to notify employees of changes in their status as soon as practical. This change in status will normally be made by the department head.
4. Emergency employees who do not report to work for an authorized closing could be subject to disciplinary action depending upon the circumstances for not reporting and the determination of the department head.
5. For large scale emergencies, all employees in senior management positions (Senior Administrative Officers, Deans, Vice Presidents, Department Chairs, Directors, and equivalent positions), as well as positions in leadership and management positions such as laboratory and facility managers, student service and support managers, are considered essential personnel. However, normal authorized closings for inclement weather would not typically require all employees in these roles to be designated as emergency personnel.

There are many positions on campus that can be designated as *emergency personnel* at the time of the closing due to their projects and/or work priorities at the time. For example, during school sessions most dining services employees would be considered essential to the operations of the university. In the event of an emergency closing during the summer months when head counts are down, a smaller number of food service staff may be designated as emergency personnel. In an administrative unit, such as the university Payroll Office, all employees would not normally be designated as *emergency personnel*. However, during payroll *close out*, that designation would change so that payroll deadlines are met.

## 2.3 Compensation For All-Day Closings (All Classified and University Staff Salaried Employees)

### 2.3.1 Non-Emergency Personnel

1. Employees absent because of an authorized all-day closing will be paid for those hours. To qualify for payment, employees must work or be on pre-approved leave the scheduled work day before and the scheduled workday after the closing.

Pre-approved leave is defined as *leave that is approved prior to the time it is to be taken; therefore: it must be approved prior to the emergency condition that resulted in the authorized closing.*

2. Employees who report to work during an all-day closing as a result of not having heard the closing announcement or who choose to work during the authorized closing shall not normally receive compensatory

leave, except in extenuating circumstances when the department head designates the employee as *emergency personnel*. Therefore, non-emergency personnel who work without the permission of the department head during periods of authorized closing shall not be credited with compensatory leave.

3. Employees whose resignations are effective on the day of an all-day closing will not qualify for payment and the separation will be effective the last actual day worked.
4. Salaried employees, whose scheduled day off falls on a day when their department is closed, will not be credited with authorized closing leave.

### **2.3.1.1 Alternate Work Schedules and Shift Work of Non-Emergency Employees**

Employees who work shift work and those working an alternate schedule as defined in the Department of Human Resource Management [Hours of Work, Policy 1.25](#) will be paid for the authorized closing for the hours they are scheduled to work that day. An alternate schedule could be comprised of more than eight hours in a work day; therefore, the employee will receive pay for their entire schedule for an all day closing.

### **2.3.2 Emergency Personnel**

Employees designated as emergency personnel must report during authorized closings; they will be credited with authorized closing leave for the hours worked to be used at a later time. Authorized closing leave must be used within 12 months of the date earned; once lapsed, it may not be used as leave or be paid out. Emergency employees who are considered non-exempt under the *Fair Labor Standards Act* and who work over 40 hours in the work week will be eligible for overtime payment. Emergency employees who are considered exempt under the *Fair Labor Standards Act* and who work over 40 hours in the work week will not be eligible for overtime payment or compensatory time for the hours above 40.

#### **2.3.2.1 Alternate Work Schedules and Shift Work of Emergency Personnel**

Emergency employees who work shift work and those working alternate schedules as defined in the Commonwealth's Department of Human Resources Management [Hours of Work, Policy 1.25](#) will receive authorized closing leave for the hours of the normal schedule worked that day. The employee will be paid at the regular rate of pay for their normal work schedule.

Emergency personnel who do not report to work as scheduled must charge time missed to accrued leave balances, or leave-without-pay, as appropriate.

## **2.4 Compensation For Early Closings or Late Openings (All Classified and University Staff Salaried Employees)**

### **2.4.1 Non-Emergency Personnel on Partial Day Closing**

When inclement weather or emergency conditions result in changes in the work schedule, such as late opening or early closing, employees will be paid for periods of authorized closings with the following guidelines.

1. To qualify for payment in these instances, employees must be on pre-approved leave or work all or part of the work schedule not affected by the authorized closing. Pre-approved leave is defined as *leave that is approved prior to the time it is to be taken; therefore, approved prior to the emergency condition that resulted in the authorized closing*.
2. Employees who leave work prior to the announcement of an early closing may not charge the difference in time to authorized closing leave described in this policy. Hours covered by the authorized closing should be charged

to Inclement Weather (IW). The difference in time must be charged to accrued leave, or leave-without-pay, as appropriate.

3. Non-emergency personnel who work during periods of authorized closing without approval of the department head shall not be credited with authorized closing leave.

#### **2.4.1.1 Alternate Work Schedules and Shift Work for Non-Emergency Employees on Partial Day Closing**

For partial closings, non-emergency employees who work "*shift work*" or who work an alternate schedule as defined in the Commonwealth's Department of Human Resources Management [\*Hours of Work, Policy 1.25\*](#), shall receive authorized closing leave for the portion of their shift during which the university was officially closed.

#### **2.4.2 Emergency Personnel on Partial Day Closing**

Employees designated as emergency personnel must report during authorized closings; they will be credited with authorized closing leave for the hours worked to be used at a later time. Emergency personnel **who do not report to work** as scheduled must charge time missed to accrued leave balances, or leave-without-pay, as appropriate.

Emergency employees who are considered non-exempt under the *Fair Labor Standards Act* and who work over 40 hours in the work week will be eligible for overtime payment.

#### **2.4.2.1 Alternate Schedules and Shift Work for Emergency Employees on Partial Day Closing**

Emergency employees who work "*shift work*" or who work alternate schedules will be paid their regular rate of pay for hours worked, and will be granted authorized closing leave for the normal schedule worked that day.

### **2.5 Transportation Difficulties (No Agency Closing)**

Employees who do not report to work as scheduled must charge time missed to accrued leave, or leave without pay as, appropriate. However, supervisors may allow employees up to a maximum of one hour past the start of their normal shift to report to work during conditions of transportation difficulties.

### **2.6 Other Applications of Policy**

#### **2.6.1 Hourly Wage Employees**

Wage employees, designated as emergency personnel, will be paid for the hours worked during periods of authorized closings. No compensatory leave will be accrued by wage employees.

#### **2.6.2 Scheduled Days Off**

Salaried employees, whose scheduled day off falls on a day when Virginia Tech operations are closed, will not be credited with compensatory leave.

#### **2.6.3 Closing on Employee's Day of Original Appointment**

##### **2.6.3.1 Non-Emergency Personnel**

If employees are *non-emergency* and an all-day closing falls on the day of appointment, they will receive pay for that day and the day will be designated as their beginning work date.

##### **2.6.3.2 Emergency Personnel**

Those designated as *emergency personnel* are required to work during all-day closings. Their appointment will be effective only if they actually work that day. If they do not report to work, their appointment will be effective the first day they do report to work.

## 2.6.4 Employees on Approved Leave

Employees who are on approved leave with pay on an all-day authorized closing will not be charged leave for the day. Instead, the time will be recorded as an Inclement Weather (IW).

## 2.6.5 Holidays

Virginia Tech typically observes certain holidays by closing on such days as Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, The Day After Thanksgiving, Independence Day and Memorial Day.

The university is open on the other compensatory holidays, such as Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Lee-Jackson Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and President's Day because classes are in session. If an authorized closing is announced on one of these holidays, the following rules apply.

### 2.6.5.1 Non-emergency employees who work the authorized closing will:

- be paid regular pay for the holiday worked,
- not earn authorized closing leave unless the department head designates the employee as emergency personnel

### 2.6.5.2 Non-emergency employees who do not work the authorized closing on a holiday will:

- be paid regular pay for the holiday and will not earn authorized closing leave.

### 2.6.5.3 Emergency employees who work the authorized closing on a holiday will:

- be paid regular pay for the holiday worked;
- earn eight hours of compensatory leave for the holiday which must be used within 12 months of the date earned; once lapsed, it may not be used as leave or be paid out.
- earn eight hours of authorized closing leave; which must be used within 12 months of the date earned; once lapsed, it may not be used as leave or be paid out.
- be compensated at time and a half for hours worked over 40 in the workweek.

### 2.6.5.4 Emergency employees who do not work will:

- be paid regular pay for the holiday
- not earn authorized closing leave.

## 2.7 Policy Exception

An exception to this policy may be granted only by the University President, the Senior Vice President and University Provost, or the Vice President for Administrative Services, or their designee, if in their judgment the conditions justify it.

## 3. Procedures

### 3.1 Communication Plan - Authorized Closing for Inclement Weather

In the fall of each year, Virginia Tech Department of Human Resources distributes a mailing to deans, directors and department heads instructing them to inform their *emergency personnel* of their departmental communication plan and what is expected of them in an authorized closing situation. Also included is a *Fact Sheet on Authorized Closings* relating to *emergency and non-emergency personnel* with the *Inclement Weather Hot Line*; the *University Operator* telephone numbers; the location frequency of WTVF Radio; and a blank roster sheet on which departments should list and post their emergency personnel.

### 3.1.1 Supervisor and Employee Responsibilities

Department heads should develop a communications plan for employees to follow in the event of emergency situations. In doing so, managers should anticipate the needs of essential operations, especially those of employees with alternate work schedules (i.e., shift work and weekends); organize a telephone tree; and share detailed instructions to ensure adequate coverage and clear communications. This is particularly important when the identification of emergency employees is contingent upon the circumstances of the closing and are, thus, subject to change.

### 3.1.2 Supervisor Assistance to Employees

Non-emergency personnel, who anticipate transportation difficulties due to inclement weather conditions when the university is not closed, are urged to seek permission from supervisors to shorten their normal work shift through the use of accrued leave. Supervisors should make every effort to accommodate these requests.

### 3.1.3 Employee Communication with Supervisors

Emergency employees should have a conversation with their supervisor, well in advance of the inclement weather season, to share information on the roads they must travel and the distance from home to work so management is aware of potential hazards, which could keep them from reaching their place of work in inclement weather situations. Employees know the conditions and the terrain they must travel to reach their work site. If they find themselves in situations where they feel their safety is compromised they are strongly encouraged to make reasonable and rational choices when deciding to come to work or stay home in order to stay out of harms way. These decisions must, however, be communicated with the supervisor as soon as possible. Management has the right to determine whether the conditions were sufficient to warrant not reporting to work.

### 3.1.4 If the Employee Has No Leave Balances to Cover Missed Hours

Pay and leave earnings will be withheld for employees who have no leave balances to cover the time missed due to inclement weather including leaving the workplace early unless the supervisor can adjust the hours of work in the workweek to make up for the missed hours. Holidays are not earned if the employee's pay is docked the day before or all of the day after a holiday.

## On-Campus

### Blacksburg Campus and Facilities in the immediate Blacksburg area (excluding off-campus Extension Offices)

#### 3.1.4.1 Early Closing

Once the decision has been made to close the university early, the Vice President for Administrative Services or, in his absence, the Senior Vice President and University Provost will inform University Relations. If it becomes necessary to close the Blacksburg campus because of inclement weather or an emergency, University Relations will use several methods to announce the decision. Although other media will be used, for the Blacksburg campus the only official notification outlets are the *WeatherLine* at 231-6668, WVTF at 89.1 FM, the university switchboard, and the university's homepage. Notices also will be communicated by University Relations via email and VT Alerts.

There may be times when the university initially decides to open based on the information available, but deteriorating weather conditions result in a decision for a delayed opening or for an all day closing. Employees, students, and visitors are encouraged to continue to check the *WeatherLine* at 231-6668, WVTF at 89.1 FM, the university switchboard, your email, and the university's homepage for any changes.

For early closings, once notified by University Relations, departmental or unit communication plans should be followed to ensure that all units have received the information about the closing and they are taking steps to ensure

that employees and students have been notified, including those who may be working or studying in labs, classrooms, or other areas.

### 3.1.4.2 All-day Closing

The ONLY official sources of information for authorized closings and delayed openings for the Blacksburg campus and facilities in the immediate Blacksburg area (excluding off-campus Extension Offices) are the following:

**Weather Hotline - 540-231-6668**  
**Virginia Tech Operator - 540-231-6000**  
**WVTF-FM - Radio Station in Roanoke, located at 89.1 or 91.9 on the radio dial**  
**Virginia Tech Website**  
**University Relations emails and VT Alerts**

In inclement weather situations, it is the responsibility of each employee to confirm if and when to report to work that day. Because the full details of university closings may not be adequately provided or described in other public media, employees are strongly advised to listen to WVTF Public Radio then confirm the status by checking the university's information lines.

### 3.1.4.3 Weekend Closings

Employees, who are scheduled to work on the traditional Saturday/Sunday weekend as part of their regular workweek are responsible for following their departmental plan or they are to contact their supervisor if an authorized closing is in effect. Such announcements will not normally be made through the authorized media sources.

### 3.1.4.4 Re-opening the University

The official announcement to re-open the university will be given by the above-mentioned sources. The announcement will designate that the university will be open on a specific day. Because employees have various work schedules they should report at their regular work schedule time for that day.

#### 3.1.4.4.1 Lunch Breaks

Should there be a late opening, such as, mid-day, employees should take their regularly scheduled lunch break, then report to work according to their schedule unless otherwise instructed by their supervisor.

### 3.1.5 Off-Campus

1. **Extension Facilities:** District and unit directors will inform employees in their respective facilities of closing by telephone.
2. **Research, Continuing Education, and Other Facilities (Off-Campus):** Directors of off-campus facilities and superintendents of outlying Agricultural Experiment Stations will communicate closing decisions to employees of their respective facilities by phone and according to their emergency communication plans.
3. **Off-Campus Classes:** Off-campus classes taught at a variety of non-university facilities around the state may be canceled due to emergency conditions at the instructor's discretion. It is recommended that each instructor have a *telephone-tree* established with their students in order to disseminate cancellation information in a timely manner.

## 4. Definitions

**Emergency Personnel:** For the purpose of this policy, emergency personnel are those employees assigned to positions identified by their departments as necessary to the maintenance of the vital operations and services of the university. Emergency personnel are required to work when classes are canceled and during other periods of authorized closing.

**Non-Emergency Personnel:** For the purpose of this policy, non-emergency personnel are those employees who are not required to report to work during authorized closings.

**Pre-Approved Leave:** Leave that has been requested by the employee and approved by management the day before or prior to the emergency condition that resulted in the authorized closing.

**Alternate Work Schedule:** A schedule that could be comprised of more than eight hours in a work-day. Virginia Tech may implement work schedules that differ from the standard workweek (typically a five-day, 40-hour per week schedule) if such schedules are deemed to promote efficient agency operations.

**Shift Work Schedule:** Typically an eight-hour work schedule unlike the standard 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule.

## 5. References

Virginia Department of Human Resource Management, [Policy 1.25, Hours of Work](#).

Virginia Department of Human Resource Management, [Policy 1.35, Emergency Closing](#).

Virginia Department of Human Resource Management, [Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

*Fair Labor Standards Act*

## 6. Approval and Revisions

- Revision 10

Throughout the policy the title of the Executive Vice President has been changed to the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, and the title of the Provost has been changed to University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

For leave reporting purposes the term *Authorized Closing (AC)* has been changed to *Inclement Weather (IW)*.

### 2.2 Determination of Classified Emergency Personnel

The *Applicant Referral Memorandum* has been changed to *Interview Information Guide*; the applicant no longer reads or signs the document.

The following sentence was added in various paragraphs related to compensatory and authorized closing leave: *Authorized closing leave must be used within 12 months of the date earned; once lapsed, it may not be used as leave or be paid out.*

### 3.1 Communication Plan

Under 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 significant information was added to encourage employees and managers to plan ahead for possible transportation difficulties for both emergency and non-emergency employees and clarification of leave balances to cover missed work hours.

Approved June 28, 2001, by Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Minnis E. Ridenour.

October 30, 2001: Technical corrections to update policy links and name change for the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Human Resource Management (formerly Department of Personnel and Training).

- Revision 11

Updates to position titles and/or responsibilities due to university reorganization.

New Section 2.2, #5 added, designating individuals in certain administrative positions as "essential personnel" for large scale emergencies.

Approved March 28, 2008 by the University President, Charles W. Steger.