

6.9 OFFICE CLOSINGS IN EMERGENCIES

It is the policy of Austin County to consider the safety of employees as a priority when dealing with an emergency closing. Situations include, but are not limited to, inclement weather and emergency situations such as a power failure, computer failure, flooding, ice, fire, a natural gas leak, etc., which create undesirable and/or unsafe conditions for employees. Any office closing shall notify the County Judge's Office.

Once a decision is made, the County Judge will notify the Elected Officials and Department Heads of any closings or delays to be communicated to their employees. In the event that a situation occurs during non-working hours that would necessitate emergency closings of Austin County offices/departments, local media sources will be asked, by the county judge's order, to broadcast an official courthouse closing statement.

Many county departments are continuous operating public safety and service departments. Many county personnel will be required to work during emergency closings. Each department head is responsible for designating their own employees and providing alternate information to personnel designated as essential during emergency closings. Public safety will be foremost in the development of departmental emergency action plans.

Non-Essential employees are responsible for the following activities:

- Remain in contact with their supervisor regarding assignments and return to duty information;
- Stay abreast of the emergency situation by monitoring radio/television/internet for instructions.

In the event there is an official emergency closing ordered by Commissioners Court, due to a disaster by state or county declaration, all essential employees (exempt or non-exempt) required to remain at work will be compensated for straight-time or actual time worked for the duration of the emergency closing for all documented time during which work is performed. Straight-time and overtime will be determined in accordance with departments routine schedule

Any employee who is scheduled off on paid leave (vacation leave, sick leave, comp, holiday or other leave); unpaid leave (FMLA or disciplinary leave without pay, sick); or is not scheduled to work that day due to their work schedule during a period of emergency closure, shall have their leave recorded as requested prior to the emergency.

Employees will have one of three classifications and will be noted on their job descriptions:

NON-ESSENTIAL. These are the clerical, judicial, maintenance personnel in the county offices who are not needed during an emergency and should stay home when their county office is closed.

NON-ESSENTIAL, MADE “ESSENTIAL” by County Judge. Those individuals who are normally part of non-essential, but who, by direction of the County Judge with request by the Elected Official, are deemed to be essential to the county even when the county is closed, will be considered ESSENTIAL for that specific occasion. These employees will be compensated with time for time worked in addition to emergencies (inclement weather etc.) time as approved by Commissioner’s Court.

ESSENTIAL personnel (EMS, SO, R&B). Those who, by the nature of their jobs, are expected to work scheduled shifts AND MORE IF NEEDED during emergencies unless there are special circumstances, will be compensated in addition to emergencies (inclement weather etc.) time as approved by Commissioner’s Court time worked, unless it is determined by the department head that the employee is unable to come to work due to safety concerns, in which case the department head may grant “other time” in extenuating circumstances.

Any essential employee who is scheduled off or is scheduled to be on paid leave may be required to return to work immediately during an emergency. Any essential employee who fails to report to work as scheduled or instructed by the Department Head during inclement weather or disaster may be subject to disciplinary action.

Any employee who fails to report to work as scheduled during a “disaster declaration” may be subject to disciplinary action, if such employee is necessary to provide for the safety and well-being of the general public or the employee is otherwise necessary for the restoration of vital services.