

# POLICY

Effective Date: June 9, 2008

Revised Date: February 22, 2018

Approved By: President Sabah Randhawa

Authority: [RCW 43.01.042](#); [WAC 357-31](#);  
[29USC201](#)

See Also: [POL-U5400.03](#) Taking And Reporting Leave During Inclement Weather  
[POL-U5410.05](#) Administering Work And Leave Time Reports  
[FRM-U5400.04A](#) Essential Information Checklist

## **POL-U5400.04 SUSPENDING UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS**

*This policy applies to all university employees.*

### **Definitions:**

**Department Heads:** Non-academic department directors, department chairs, academic administrators, managers and college deans.

**FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act):** Federal law that establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time workers in the private sector and in federal, state and local governments.

- FLSA exempt professional staff employees and faculty are not eligible for overtime pay.
- FLSA non-exempt employees are eligible for overtime pay.

**Satellite Offices:** Western Washington University (WWU) operated offices outside of the Bellingham city limits.

### **1. President May Suspend Operations**

The President, in consultation with senior university officers and local officials, may temporarily suspend the operation of any or all units when an emergency situation adversely affects university operations, the public health, property, well being, or safety of students, faculty and staff. Consideration will be given to those operations most directly affected by the emergency to minimize disruption of regular teaching and public service programs. Operations may be suspended for an entire or a partial day.

Directors of satellite offices may suspend operations at their site after consulting with the Provost.

**Exception:** Directors of satellite offices residing at another educational institution will comply with the decisions of that institution.

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When suspended operations exceed 15 calendar days per event, the President will consult with state and federal officials.

Emergency situations which might affect such decisions include, but are not limited to:

- a) Severe weather conditions,
- b) Natural disasters,
- c) Fire or related hazards,
- d) Mechanical or equipment failure, or
- e) A local or pandemic health care emergency.

### **2. President Provides Notification of a Suspension During Normal Academic Days**

The decision to suspend operations during normal academic days (Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) will be communicated by the President to:

- a) The vice presidents and deans, for subsequent notification to all persons within their units, and
- b) The Office of University Communications.

### **3. Director of Office of University Communications and Department Heads Provide Notification of Suspension After Normal Academic Day Hours**

The Director of the Office of University Communications will communicate the suspension through the university's emergency notification systems including the Storm and Emergency Hotline and appropriate media. Notification will be accomplished no later than 6 a.m., or as soon as practical, on the day of a closure.

Department heads that have employees working between 5 p.m. and 6 a.m. will ensure direct contact is made to those employees regarding the status of university operations and their work assignment.

### **4. Notifications Will Include Specific Information**

Announcements, to the degree practical, may include:

- a) Basic information about the nature of the emergency,
- b) Applicability to facilities (including satellite offices), units, employees, and students,

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- c) Hazard warnings of certain facilities when applicable,
- d) Anticipated duration of the suspension, and
- e) Direction on where to obtain related procedural information.

### **5. Employees Encouraged to Participate In Preparation for Effective Emergency Communication**

Employees are expected to:

- a) Ensure they have the ability to obtain information from at least one source of media to be informed of university operation status and updates, and
- b) Have a current home and cellular telephone number and emergency contact information on file with their department and with Human Resources.

### **6. President, Vice Presidents and Deans Identify Essential Operations and Employees Who Perform an Essential Function**

The president, vice presidents and deans will determine, in consultation with department heads, crucial operations and employees who perform an essential function. Notification to employees who will be instructed to report to work or be on-call during the closure will be made by the vice presidents or department heads.

### **7. Non-Essential FLSA Non-Exempt Professional Staff and Classified Staff Will Not Report to Work or Telework**

Unless notified as an employee who performs an essential function as outlined in provision #6 above, FLSA non-exempt professional staff and classified staff may not report to work or perform work related duties in any capacity, including working from home, when university operations have been suspended. However, directors or deans may, on a temporary basis, approve work assignments to be performed by classified staff or FLSA non-exempt professional staff at home when the director or dean:

- a) Has determined the employee is needed to perform an essential function during suspended operations,
- b) Confirms the employee has the capability to adequately perform the essential function(s) from home, or
- c) Specifies to the employee the work to be done and the amount of work time allotted (number of hours and dates) and documents directive.

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### **8. Department Heads Ensure Work Areas are Secure**

All department heads will establish and implement department procedures for securing work areas in the event operations are suspended during regular hours and when suspension is probable.

### **9. Classified Staff and FLSA Non-Exempt Professional Staff Must Charge Leave**

Non-exempt FLSA professional staff and classified staff not called to work to perform an essential function(s) during suspended operations will elect to:

- a) Make up time lost,
- b) Use available vacation, personal holiday, or compensatory time, or
- c) Take leave without pay.

All use of paid and unpaid leave must follow applicable bargaining unit contracts or Department of Personnel rule(s).

Make up of lost time must be done within 90 calendar days beginning with the last day of the closure. Such makeup time will be granted only on a compensatory time basis at time and one-half for full-time employees. Employees must work 5.3 overtime hours to equal 8 hours of straight-time pay. Part-time employees must make up hours on a straight-time basis.

### **10. FLSA Exempt Professional Staff Receive Regular Salaries for Suspended Operations Lasting Less Than One Week**

FLSA exempt Professional Staff are not to charge leave time and will receive their regular salaries if the suspension is 4 days or less in a given work week per federal regulations.

If operations are suspended for a full work week or more, the full appointment time for each suspended work week should be:

- a) Charged with available vacation or personal holiday, or
- b) Leave without pay.

### **11. Use Of Sick Leave Limited**

Employees who wish to charge sick leave due to being ill during the suspension must:

- a) Have notified their supervisor each day of illness during the suspension, and

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- b) Provide appropriate medical documentation upon return to work if requested by their supervisor when there is a reasonable concern of sick leave abuse.

### **12. Human Resources Determines If Leave Without Pay Status Affects Holiday Pay for Classified Staff and Non-Exempt Professional Staff**

When applicable, employees who take leave without pay will be eligible for holiday pay if the suspended operations related absence falls prior to a holiday provided requirements for holiday pay are met. For example, the employee must be in full pay status (based on appointment percentage) on the last scheduled work day preceding the first suspended operations absence.

### **13. Supervisors Ensure All Employees Charge Leave for Prescheduled Leave**

All employees scheduled to take vacation or who are on leave at the time suspended operations is declared will be compensated as previously arranged.

Employees on medical leave or other pre-approved leave will submit leave time in accordance with the appropriate policy or agreement.

### **14. Classified Staff and FLSA Non-Exempt Professional Staff Called to Work to Perform an Essential Function are Compensated**

FLSA non-exempt professional staff called to work by a vice president, dean or department head to perform an essential function during suspended operations will receive time and one-half for any time worked.

Classified staff will be compensated for "call back" per their bargaining unit contracts.

### **15. Department Heads Must Plan and Prepare for Suspended Operations**

Department heads will ensure that internal procedures are established for their respective areas in order to effectively respond and maintain some level of operation and communication when access to vital information is limited or cut off due to an emergency situation (see *Essential Information Checklist* FRM-5400.04A).

### **16. Department Heads Authorize Expenses for Employees Required to Remain On or Near Campus**

Employees not on duty but required to remain on or near the campus or other university facilities during the closure will be housed and fed at university expense if a temporary relocation is needed and given prior approval by the department head.

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### **17. President May Implement Layoffs**

If suspended operations exceed 15 calendar days per event, the President may implement layoff policies and procedures. All appropriate employee representatives will be notified in advance when a layoff situation is being considered. Affected employees will be given a minimum of 30 days notice or per relevant bargaining unit contract or handbook.

### **18. Human Resources Provides Guidance**

The Human Resources Department is the point of contact for questions regarding this policy and related procedures.