



December 5, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Department Directors and Elected Officials

FR: Ray Walton 
Interim Director

RE: Severe Weather/Emergency Evacuation Policy

The State of Iowa, as an employer, has a vested interest in the safety and well-being of all its employees and the provision of services to the citizens of Iowa. Essential services to the public will be maintained during periods of severe weather and emergency evacuations. The following policy is adopted concerning periods of severe weather or when a State facility is closed due to emergency conditions. This policy supersedes all other policies previously issued and has been effective since December 6, 2001.

The State of Iowa Severe Weather/Emergency Evacuation Policy is as follows:

It is the Governor's policy that severe weather will not result in the closing of state facilities. However, situations do arise that pose a risk to the health and safety of public employees and therefore the following procedures are in effect to ensure the orderly closing or evacuation of state buildings:

Severe Weather Provisions

When the proper authorities declare a severe weather condition, employees will not be required to report to work. Also, if an employee, using reasonable judgment, believes that travel would jeopardize his or her individual health and safety, that employee will not be required to report to work. Under both such conditions, employees may use accrued annual leave (vacation), compensatory time previously accrued, or leave without pay for such absences.

Individual supervisors will make every attempt to allow employees, at the employees' discretion, to work at an alternate work site or make up missed time during the pay week for any absences caused by severe weather conditions. Therefore, employees must provide their employing departments with a phone number or contact through which they can be reached during severe weather so that work assignments can be communicated.

Whenever possible during a declared severe weather emergency, employees reporting to the regular work location will be allowed to work the normal work schedule. Employees reporting to work during a declared severe weather situation shall be subject to the following conditions:

- If the employee reports to work within one-half (½) hour of the regularly scheduled reporting time, the employee will be assumed to have reported on time.

- If the employee reports after one-half (1/2) hour of the regularly scheduled reporting time, the employee shall be credited with working the first one-half (1/2) hour of the work day and, in addition, paid for all hours actually worked on that day.

Emergency Evacuation Provisions

An emergency evacuation should only be mandated when the condition of a State facility is such that it would be a health or safety concern for employees assigned to that facility. An emergency condition exists when the facility is unsafe for normal business operations due to an environmental hazard, a structural failure, or a mechanical condition that would threaten the health and safety of employees assigned to that facility. Proper management authority, after consultation with the Department of Administrative Services, the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the Department of Public Health and/or the Department of Public Safety will make the determination of whether an immediate health or safety concern exists.

If a facility is subject to an emergency closing, affected employees will remain in pay status for all scheduled work hours. Employees sent home from work will not be required to utilize paid accrued annual or compensatory leave, nor shall employees be subject to leave without pay. Management will attempt to assign work that can be performed away from the normal work site to affected employees or direct employees to an alternate work location on a temporary or permanent basis. As such, employees must provide managers and supervisors with a telephone number at which an employee can be reached during normal work hours. This will allow the employer to direct the employee to an alternate work site or provide work assignments throughout the period of emergency closing.

A severe weather declaration coupled with a short-term closing of offices is not an emergency closing for the purposes of this policy. However, if a severe weather condition results in an environmental, structural, or mechanical failure at a facility, that facility may be subject to closure. In such situations it is the effect of the weather event that results in the emergency closing, not the merely the weather condition itself.

Additional Considerations

It is the Governor's policy that plans must be in place to ensure that state government can operate under exceptional circumstances. Therefore, executive branch departments must develop plans to ensure staffing and provision of essential services to the public during severe weather or emergency closings. Such plans should be disseminated to all employees and must include the following information:

1. List of all employees
2. Phone numbers/contact information for all employees (phone tree)
3. Establishment of chain of command
4. Location to meet in the event of an emergency closing during work hours
5. Procedure for accounting for all employees after an evacuation
6. Designation of Emergency Coordinator(s)
7. Procedure for identifying and evacuating employees who need assistance (see below)
8. Appropriate alternate work locations
9. Equipment necessary to work from an alternate location
10. Essential information on heat, lights, etc.
11. Evacuation maps/assignment of escape routes for employees
12. Procedures for employees to shut down critical systems
 - Shut down computers
 - Turn off lights
 - Forward voice mail

13. Preferred means for reporting fires and other emergencies
14. If possible, designation of a first aid person and alternate
15. Designation of employees with responsibilities during an emergency

The Office of the Governor will determine when a severe weather or emergency condition exists for all State buildings on the Capitol Complex. Department Directors, or their designees, will determine when a severe weather or emergency condition exists for State facilities outside the Capitol Complex.

Federal discrimination laws allow employers to obtain and appropriately use information necessary to develop a comprehensive emergency evacuation plan. Thus, employers may ask employees to self-identify whether they would require assistance because of a disability or a medical condition. All employees should be asked whether they would require assistance, not just those with obvious disabilities. Furthermore, the employer should not assume that a person with an obvious disability would need assistance in evacuating. Therefore, a form is provided with this policy to allow employees to self-identify their needs during an emergency evacuation. This form should be immediately distributed to all employees, regardless of whether they have an obvious disability. This form should also be made available to all new employees upon hire and should remain readily available to all employees in the event they do develop a condition that would require them to have assistance during an evacuation.

- C: Personnel Officers
Management Liaisons
Personnel Assistants
Department of Administrative Services Executive Leadership Team
Department of Administrative Services Labor Relations & Legal Services Team