



**Emergency Communication Plan  
for Hazardous Weather Coordination,  
Clean Air Alert Policy  
and  
Possible Work Disruptions  
For Federal Agencies in Oklahoma  
FY 2009**

**Developed in accordance with Office of Personnel Guidelines**

# INTRODUCTION

## **OUTLINE AND PURPOSE:**

This Federal Emergency Communications Plan (herein referred to as the Plan) outlines the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board's (FEB) procedures, identifies responsibilities and provides interagency communications strategies for use by Federal Agency leaders in Oklahoma for workforce planning purposes. It also provides guidelines on designating emergency personnel, along with pay and leave policies as developed by the US Office of Personnel Management.

Emergency situations occasionally arise which are beyond the control of management or employees. These situations may hinder the opening of Federal offices, employees from getting to work, or create a situation to dismiss employees early under certain circumstances. The following guidelines are suggested for situations that hinder significant numbers of employees in Oklahoma from reporting for work on time or which require agencies to close all or part of their activities, including adverse weather conditions (snow emergencies, severe icing conditions, floods, and tornadoes) air pollution, disruption of power and/or water, and other emergency situations that would disrupt Government operations.

It is important for all Federal agencies affected by the same emergency conditions to try to coordinate, to the maximum extent possible, their plans for normal business operations, or the release/excusal of their employees, as well as appropriate leave policies to protect the well being of the Federal workforce and its customers. *This coordinated effort promotes equitable treatment of employees, avoids confusion, and lessens traffic congestion and hazards.*

The purpose of this Emergency Communications Plan is to coordinate plans for normal business operations, or plans for the release/excusal of employees from Federal offices and activities due to snow, ice accumulations, flooding or tornadoes. The telephone notification procedures outlined may also be used for other types of announcements affecting Federal employees (such as extra Christmas holiday leave granted by Presidential Order). In consideration of environmental issues, this plan will also serve as a notification procedure for "Clean Air Alert" days.

## **FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD RESPONSIBILITY:**

Federal Executive Boards were established on November 13, 1961 by Presidential Memorandum. As outlined in *Part 960 of Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations*. "Federal Executive Boards shall be responsible for... emergency operations, such as under hazardous weather conditions, responding to blood donations needs, and communicating related leave policies." (Reference: 5 CFR Part 960.107.)

Subsequent policy memorandums issued by the Director, US Office of Personnel Management have requested that Federal Executive Boards nationwide play a critical role in emergency preparedness and response from a workforce planning perspective in their communities. (Reference: August 15, 2003 Director James Memo)

As a central management agency of the United States Federal government, the US Office of Personnel Management includes Federal Executive Boards in its national communications plan during times of national and local emergencies. Their plan calls for "immediate notification of



changes to the operating status of the government to ....Federal Executive Boards and other key Federal and local authorities..." (Reference: Federal Manager's Decision Maker's Emergency Guide. 2002 available at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov))

At this time, the Oklahoma FEB's role in emergency decisions and notifications is that of providing a "recommendation" based on up-to-date, consistent and accurate information. In addition, the US Office of Personnel Management and the US Department of Homeland Security at the headquarters level have identified the FEB network nationwide as an integral resource for information about governmentwide operations following an emergency. (Reference – February 14, 2002 Memo)

**As in the past, the attached procedures are based on the principle that the business of the Federal Government is vital to serving the public everywhere.** No provision of these guidelines may be applied in contravention of contractual agreements; agency instructions or guidelines; Comptroller General Rulings; or other pertinent controlling policies, authorities and instructions governing the granting of annual leave or authorization of excused absence without charge to leave during emergency situations. Application of this guidance must be consistent with the provisions of applicable collective bargaining agreements or other controlling policies, authorities, and instructions. The purpose of this strategy is to provide **information** when an emergency situation arises. Agencies are encouraged to follow these procedures; however, agencies continue to have the responsibility for discretionary authority to determine normal business operations, grant a reasonable amount of excused absence for individual hardships or circumstances unique to an employee. For example, factors such as distance, availability of transportation, or available alternatives to childcare or eldercare may be considered. ***In all cases, the final decision to dismiss employees or close offices will be made by the head of each agency and installation in the local area.***

## **FEDERAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

At least annually, agencies should provide written procedures for emergency dismissal or closure to employees. The notice should tell employees how they will be notified and include the text of the media announcements to be used and a detailed explanation of their meaning. The notice also should explain that if an "unscheduled leave" policy is announced, employees must contact their agencies to request to use annual leave, leave without pay, and/or previously earned compensatory time off or credit hours.

At least annually, agencies should identify emergency personnel and notify them in writing that they are designated as "emergency employees." The term "emergency employee" is used to designate those employees who must report for work in emergency situations. The notice should include the requirement that "emergency employees" report for, or remain at work in emergency situations and an explanation that dismissal or closure announcements do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise. *Agencies must be careful to designate which employees are "emergency employees" for the purpose of possible work disruptions and which employees are "emergency employees" for the purpose of adverse weather conditions and other emergency situations.* (Note: Employees designated as "emergency employees" for the purpose of possible work disruptions typically will include those on the agency's "business recovery team" or "day 1 team.") If an agency determines that a situation requires employees not designated as "emergency employees" to report for, or remain at work during an emergency, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.



*Agencies are responsible for determining closure, dismissal, and leave policies for employees on shift work and alternative work schedules (i.e., flexible or compressed work schedules) and for informing employees of these policies.*

Telecommuting is an option for agencies where the nature of work is conducive to telecommuting. Some agencies feel more comfortable to have employees sign an agreement for this kind of arrangement. A sample telecommuting agreement is provided by attachment to this document.

### **SCOPE OF THIS PLAN:**

Although each Federal agency is responsible for the safety of its employees and the Continuity of Operations, this guide assists Federal agencies in Oklahoma with obtaining and coordinating relevant information that can be readily shared among Federal agencies and used for decision-making relative to the Federal workforce.

This Plan is relevant for all executive agencies located in the Oklahoma area. Facilities in outlying areas may prefer to develop their own plans, since they are subject to different emergency and traffic conditions.

Oklahoma FEB recommendations/coordinations DO NOT pertain to agency personnel who have been designated as “emergency essential.”

The Plan does not replace Federal agencies’ individual emergency plans or building occupant emergency plans but rather complements them and serves as a resource for information-sharing and uniform decision-making. The Plan was developed to mirror the procedures cooperatively outlined by the US Office of Personnel Management, the US General Services Administration and DHS / FEMA in the “Federal Workforce Release Decision and Notification Protocol” for the National Capitol Region.



# IMPLEMENTATION

**Emergencies Before the Workday Begins:** According to OPM regulations on leave, agencies may excuse an employee without loss of pay or charge to leave (i.e., grant a reasonable amount of excused absence) if the employee is unavoidably delayed in arriving for work. Factors such as distance, availability of transportation, the need to make alternative child care arrangements, and the success of other employees in similar situations should be considered in determining the amount of excused absence to grant. *However, employees have no entitlement to excused absence.* Agencies must notify employees of the procedures to be followed in this situation.

**Emergencies During Normal Work Hours:** When an event causes agencies to close during the work day, agencies may excuse an employee without loss of pay or charge to leave (i.e., grant a reasonable amount of excused absence) to avoid hardships, e.g., when younger children are released from school/child care centers earlier than the announced dismissal time and no alternative forms of child care are available. However, employees have no entitlement to excused absence. Agencies must notify employees of the procedures to be followed in these situations.

## Hazardous Weather



The National Weather Service (NWS) will advise the Federal Executive Board's (FEB) Executive Director of hazardous weather situations. This notification is usually made when warnings of snow or accumulations of ice have been issued. These forecasts or reports of snow and/or ice storm conditions are usually the basis for which telephone notification procedure becomes operational.

After consultation with the NWS, the FEB Executive Director will make advisory information available to affected Federal establishments when conditions indicate an early dismissal situation.

When hazardous conditions develop during the night or before normal duty hours, the NWS will contact the FEB Executive Director (or designated alternate) to advise him/her of the situation. The Executive Director or designated alternate will contact agency heads providing 24/7 contact information and ***make information available regarding weather conditions on the Voice Mail recording of the FEB Office number, (405) 231-4167.*** ***In all cases, the final decision to dismiss employees or close offices will be made by the head of each agency and installation in the local area.***

Employees should be advised of the notification procedures within their employing agency. Radio and/or television announcements of agency closings do not substitute for personal communications with agency officials. Agency heads or a designee are asked to notify the FEB Office of closings. For security purposes, agencies located in GSA-controlled property are asked to notify the GSA Building Manager when offices will not be occupied during normal business hours. ***In all cases, the final decision to dismiss employees or close offices will be made by the head of each agency and installation in the local area.***



## Clean Air Alert



The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) or Department of Environmental Quality will fax "Clean Air Alert" designations to the FEB Office. This notification will occur when forecasted weather conditions indicate a risk of violating the Environmental Protection Agency's standard of air pollution in the Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Stillwater and Lawton areas. Using advanced computerized information, a team of meteorologists, health department professionals and regional government representatives monitors Central Oklahoma weather conditions and distributes alert day notices the day



before weather conditions are expected to aggravate pollution levels. Clean Air Alerts will be faxed from the FEB office to agencies in the form of a one-page flyer that can be duplicated and attached to exit doors for ALL employees to see. On “Alert Days” citizens are encouraged to reduce carbon monoxide or ozone levels by carpooling or riding the bus (\$.25 on Clean Air Alert days), if possible. Public transportation route information for Oklahoma City is provided at <http://www.okc-cityhall.org/> for ease of distribution. Employees in Tulsa and other metropolitan areas will need to contact your local Metro Transit Authority to obtain route information.

## All other Emergencies



In the event of any other situations, the Federal Executive Board will coordinate emergency and other interagency actions, including communications to ensure Federal agencies receive updated information regarding initiatives and events that affect the Federal community. *The FEB will maintain a list of emergency contacts within the Federal community (as well as alternates) with off-duty contact information for use in the event of other emergencies.* This information will not be published or distributed; however, will be made available to ‘responding’ Federal agencies if determined appropriate in the event of a disaster.

## NOTIFICATION PROCESS:

The Oklahoma FEB collects and maintains a database of emergency contact information for each local agency head and their deputy or other designated official for use in the event of a widespread emergency during work and/or non-work hours. This information is used only in the event of a widespread local or national emergency. The Executive Director will hold this information securely at all times.

Participation in this notification process is voluntary. In order to ensure and maintain an executive-level exchange, communications are designed for Federal agency heads, deputies or designated alternates only. The designated official should have decision-making authority relative to the Federal workforce. Each agency is requested to submit a minimum of two points of contact.

In the event of a localized emergency, the Oklahoma FEB considers it prudent to notify all of our agency contacts of the issue regardless of whether they are personally affected or not. This will make them aware of the situation and help avoid rumors among employees, particularly if there is media coverage. It is also helpful should the situation become more widespread.

NOTE: it is not appropriate to delegate this agency responsibility to Facilities or Building Managers, COOP planners, or contractors and other non-Federal employees.

Notifications will be activated by collective agreement among the Oklahoma FEB leadership and only during those cases deemed as emergency. Scheduled and spontaneous tests will take place throughout the year on all systems to ensure that they are working.

## SUMMARY: The Oklahoma FEB will:

- Strive to provide Agency heads with accurate, up-to-date and consistent information so that informed decisions can be made about agency operations;
- Maintain a database of emergency contact information for local agency heads and their designated alternates and update on a quarterly basis;
- The Oklahoma FEB will provide regular status reports to the US Office of Personnel Management’s 24 Watch Center (202-418-0111) and DHS / Federal Protective Service’s 24 hour Mid Atlantic Mega Center (800 525-5726,) when necessary;



- Distribute US Office of Personnel Management, Administration and other guidance as appropriate.

**The Oklahoma FEB WILL NOT:**

- Close Federal buildings or Federal facilities;
- Speak on behalf of any individual Federal agency (to the media, Federal employees or the general public.)
- Have final decision-making authority regarding the status of a Federal agency's operations.
- Designate "emergency" employees



# SAMPLE SELF-CERTIFICATION SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR HOME-BASED TELECOMMUTERS

Provided courtesy of FAA

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

***The following checklist is designed to assess the overall safety of the alternate worksite. Each participant should read and complete the self-certification safety checklist. Upon completion, the checklist should be signed and dated by the participating employee and his/her supervisor.***

The alternate worksite is located at: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the designated work area: \_\_\_\_\_

## A. WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

1. Are temperature, noise, ventilation, and lighting levels adequate to maintain your normal level of job performance? Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Are all stairs with four or more steps equipped with handrails? Yes ( ) No ( )

3. Does the electrical system conform to appropriate local building codes? Yes ( ) No ( )

4. Are aisles, doorways, and corners free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement? Yes ( ) No ( )

5. Are file cabinets and storage closets arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways? Yes ( ) No ( )

6. Are chairs free of loose casters (wheels) and are legs of the chairs sturdy? Yes ( ) No ( )

7. Are the phone lines, electrical cords, and extension wires secured under a desk or alongside a baseboard? Yes ( ) No ( )

8. Is the office space neat, clear, and free of excessive amounts of combustibles? Yes ( ) No ( )

9. Are floor surfaces (including carpets) clean, dry, level, and free of worn or frayed seams? Yes ( ) No ( )

10. Is there enough light for reading? Yes ( ) No ( )



B. COMPUTER WORKSTATION (IF APPLICABLE)

- 11. Is your chair adjustable? Yes ( ) No ( )
  
- 12. Is your back adequately supported by a backrest? Yes ( ) No ( )
  
- 13. Is your computer monitor eye level? Yes ( ) No ( )
  
- 14. When keying, are your forearms close to parallel with the floor? Yes ( ) No ( )
  
- 15. Are your wrists fairly straight when keying? Yes ( ) No ( )

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Please send a copy of this list to your telecommuting coordinator and retain a copy for your records.***



## SAMPLE TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT

Provided courtesy of FAA

Employee Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title, Series, and Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Telecommuting Location:  Work at Home

Telecenter -- Location \_\_\_\_\_

"Virtual Office"

Phone number at telecommuting location: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Telecommuting Schedule: Provide specific days during which employee will telecommute (e.g., Monday and Wednesday each week, 2nd Thursday of each pay period, 1st Monday of every month, etc.):

Projected projects/tasks/duties to be performed while telecommuting:  
(a separate document may be attached if necessary)

Terms and conditions of telecommuting participation:

1. Telecommuting participation is voluntary on the part of the employee and the supervisor. Participation in the program may be terminated at any time by either party.
2. The employee and the supervisor must obtain and review a copy of the FAA Telecommuting Handbook. Signature on this agreement constitutes commitment to abide by all rules, procedures, terms, and conditions of the telecommuting program as described in the Handbook and in this agreement.
3. If working at home, the employee has completed a Self-Certification Safety Checklist to certify that the home is in compliance with safety guidelines.
4. Unless otherwise agreed, the employee will continue to work the same work schedule while telecommuting as was approved for the normal work site. A different work schedule may be established in accordance with the work schedule policies of the organization and the FAA, if requested by the employee and approved by the supervisor.
5. The employee is prohibited from working overtime, compensatory time and/or credit hours while telecommuting unless approved in advance by the supervisor.
6. Unless short-term variations are mutually agreed to in advance by the employee and the supervisor, the employee will telecommute in accordance with the schedule identified in this agreement. The employee may be required to forego telecommuting on a scheduled telecommuting day if work obligations require that he or she must report to the normal work site. The "missed" telecommuting day may be rescheduled upon mutual agreement.
7. The employee is not permitted to telecommute for partial days, unless the remainder of the day is accounted for by approved leave status.
8. The employee and the supervisor will make and adhere to arrangements for all necessary administrative procedures, including time and attendance, request and approval of leave, review of work products and accomplishments, and appropriate communications while telecommuting.



9. The duties, tasks, and projects to be completed while telecommuting have been documented in this agreement. The employee and supervisor are responsible for making appropriate modifications to this agreement in the event that the work to be performed while telecommuting changes over time. Procedures for periodic review of completed assignments, work products, and other accomplishments while telecommuting will be established and the employee and supervisor will be responsible for regularly reviewing and discussing work products.

By signing below, the employee and supervisor agree to abide by all terms and conditions contained in this agreement and the FAA Telecommuting Handbook.

Employee signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

***A copy of the completed and signed telecommuting agreement must be forwarded to the telecommuting coordinator in the servicing human resource management office before the employee begins telecommuting.***



## **ADDENDUM : AGENCY HUMAN RESOURCES GUIDANCE**

At least annually, Federal agencies should identify employees who must report for work and continue government operations during a disruption of operations and notify them in writing that they are designated as “emergency personnel” (5 USC Sec 7106). The notice should include the requirement that emergency employees report for or remain at work when operations are disrupted and an explanation that dismissal or closure announcements do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise.

Agencies must be aware that those positions identified as “emergency” may vary depending on the emergency situation. An agency’s response can depend on the nature of the emergency, nature of agency mission and the emergency location. There can be different categories of emergency personnel. If an agency determines that a situation requires employees not designated as emergency employees to report for or remain at work when operations are disrupted, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.

Agencies continue to have discretionary authority to grant a reasonable amount of excused absence (without charge to leave or loss of pay) for individual hardships or circumstances unique to an employee. For example, factors such as distance, availability of transportation or childcare / eldercare alternatives may be considered. The official US Office of Personnel Management guidelines for supervisors to make these decisions can be found on their web site at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov) under “Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures for Federal Employees” and the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Chapter 1, Part 610, Subpart C – Administrative Dismissals. Although Federal managers have the discretion to offer “excused absences” to individuals or groups of employees for some emergency situations, it is not an entitlement. Each agency makes its own determinations on a case-by-case basis.

At least annually, agencies should provide written procedures for dismissal or closure to employees. The guidance should include information explaining the notification process.

Agencies are responsible for developing and maintaining a Continuity of Operations Plan. (COOP) The COOP provides guidance for, and facilitates the preparation of, site specific plans and procedures that help ensure the safety of their agency personnel. The COOP outlines how the organizational elements will continue essential operations in the event of an emergency or threat.

Federal agencies in GSA-owned and leased space, particularly multi-tenant sites, should identify an employee with decision-making authority to represent the agency on GSA’s Building Security Committees.



## **ADDENDUM: GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES**

Employees should contact their agencies to request annual leave, leave without pay, and/or use of earned compensatory time off or credit hours when an “unscheduled leave” policy is announced. Agencies should notify their employees of the procedures for making such requests.

Employees must be aware that those positions identified as “emergency” may vary depending on the emergency situation. An agency’s response can depend on the nature of the emergency, nature of agency mission and the emergency location. There can be different categories of emergency personnel.

Employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the procedures that have been put into place at their agency, as well as the means of notification that an agency will use to inform and instruct employees.

Employees are encouraged to develop personal family plans for use during times of emergency. These plans should outline *in advance* what should be done an emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation, use common sense and whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Think about the places where your family spends time: school, work and other places you frequent. Ask about their emergency plans. Find out how they will communicate with families during an emergency. If they do not have an emergency plan, consider helping develop one. The US Department of Homeland Security hosts a web site to provide guidance to the general public for all sorts of emergency situations. (Source: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov))

For more information or to comment on the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board’s Emergency Communications Plan, please contact Executive Director, LeAnn Jenkins on office phone, (405) 231-4167; cell phone, (405) 831-5746; or email [LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov](mailto:LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov)

