



Policy 6.17 Disaster Preparedness and University State of Emergency Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do departments have the right to make their own decisions to send people home even if the university remains open?

No. If departments choose independently to close and send employees home, the employees must use leave time. Only the university president, in consultation with provost, vice presidents and the vice president for human resources can declare a University State of Emergency.

2. What if we have a very severe weather emergency that lasts for a week? Will faculty and staff be paid?

The Disaster Preparedness and University State of Emergency policy is not in effect for weather emergencies (unless they are of the scale such as occurred with Hurricane Katrina, or require that the university close for an entire term). If the university experiences a weather emergency severe enough to cancel classes for an entire week, this would fall under [Weather or Other Short Term Closing policy 6.15](#).

Essential, Alternate, and Standby Designations

3. How did my college/unit determine who is essential, alternate, or standby?

Based on the assignments required for supporting emergency response teams and the need for employees to support critical business operations and services during the University State of Emergency, each college or unit determined which employees were essential, alternate, or standby.

4. What happens if I am designated as an essential employee and I am called for military service or National Guard service during a University State of Emergency?

The authority of the President of the United States and the Governor of the State of Ohio preempts that of Ohio State's president. Essential employees who are called to serve in the military or National Guard should report for duty. [Military Leave/Reemployment Rights, policy 6.35](#) remains in effect during a University State of Emergency.

5. Do employees in temp appointments need to be designated as essential, alternate, and standby? If so, do they need to be notified on an annual basis?

Only those in key roles and/or appointments beyond six months should be designated and notified annually.

6. Is there standard language that should be used for the annual designation notification to faculty and staff?

The recommended language is found online at hr.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/617-sample-annual-disaster-status-notification.pdf.

Working during a University State of Emergency

7. Can I work at home or another location during a University State of Emergency?

Your department must approve you working at home or another location before you do so. We encourage units to make arrangements for faculty and staff to be able to work at home, however, depending on the length of the closure and the nature of the individual's work, there may not be meaningful work that can be done at home or another location. Below are a few examples of work that may or may not be able to be done during a University State of Emergency; these are only examples and it is crucial to remember that your department must approve any work done from an alternate location.



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Some examples of work that could be done from home might be:

- If phones can be forwarded without business disruption, they could be answered from home.
- Faculty could continue their research and writing from home. If the university is closed and undergraduate classes are cancelled, teaching cannot be continued at home. The university may determine that graduate seminars could continue on-line or via conference calls if feasible.
- IT staff may be able to do much of their work from off-campus locations, as long as computer systems are operational.

Some examples of work that probably cannot be done from home might be:

- Animal care.
- Maintenance of experiments housed in campus facilities.
- Maintenance (regular or emergency) of campus facilities.
- Public safety work (e.g. police rounds).
- Health care services for which physical presence is required.
- Preparing and serving food for residents, staff, patients, etc.

8. Can the university centrally reassign employees to other units to perform essential work if they have not been designated as essential in their home unit?

Yes. The Office of Human Resources, Talent Acquisition will coordinate a Talent Deployment Center (TDC) for employees designated as non-essential who volunteer to work to help meet the university's needs during a University State of Emergency. The TDC will coordinate pertinent information about available faculty and staff, unit needs, and provide guidance on resource use. You can access this service by calling 614-292-1050 or emailing talentdeploymentcenter@hr.osu.edu.

9. What if I'm not approved to work for my department and another department needs me? Who pays? Do I need home department approval?

The Office of Human Resources will operate the Talent Deployment Center (TDC) to help faculty and staff not needed in their home department but choose to work in another unit as needed. This will not require home department approval. All faculty and staff are responsible to contact their home department to confirm whether or not they are needed and if their designation has changed. The college/VP unit for which the work is performed is responsible for funding and assuring compensation for this work. Compensation will be at the individual's regular base pay (hourly rate [non-exempt] and regular rate [exempt]) for their original appointment unless other arrangements are approved by the Office of Human Resources.

10. What if I am contacted to be assigned to another unit for essential work yet I have approved non-essential work from my own department?

Essential work anywhere takes priority over non-essential work in your department. You should communicate to your supervisor where you are needed for essential work.

11. Will student employees work during a University State of Emergency?



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Some students will return home but some will remain at the university. Student employees who work during a University State of Emergency will be paid in accordance with university policies.

Pay During a University State of Emergency

12. If employees work overtime, how will they be paid?

The university reserves the right to award compensatory time off in lieu of overtime to eligible staff during a University State of Emergency. In cases of mandated overtime, the employee has the right to elect overtime pay or compensatory time off.

13. If employees work outside of their classification, how will they be paid?

Faculty, staff, graduate associates, and student-employees working out of classification will be paid according to university rules or policies, their union contract, and/or appropriate federal, state, and local employment laws. Compensation will be at the individual's regular base pay for their original appointment unless other arrangements are approved by the Office of Human Resources. The college/VP unit for which the work is performed is responsible for funding and assuring compensation for this work.

14. If an employee temporarily works outside of their classification during a University State of Emergency, will they return to their original classification after the emergency has passed?

Yes. Employees who temporarily work out of their classification during the emergency will return to their original classification after the University State of Emergency has passed or sooner if they are no longer needed to work outside their classification.

15. How will I get paid if HRIS goes down?

Payroll has a business continuity plan in place to ensure that employees will get paid if the HRIS is down.

16. How will I be informed about how I'll be paid?

The Office of Human Resources will communicate how you will get paid if this situation occurs. In the unlikely event that a disaster would occur on a regularly scheduled payday, the following would occur:

- Employees on direct deposit will receive their pay directly in their account
- Employees not on direct deposit will receive their checks as they normally do through the mail.

We encourage employees to sign up for direct deposit now to minimize the inconvenience to you if such a disaster occurs.

17. How will I get paid if bank systems or the Federal Reserve goes down, or if many of their employees are sick? How will I know how I will be paid?

The Federal Reserve System and all banks are required to have business continuity plans should such a disaster occur. Check with your bank to see how they plan to operate in such a situation. In the meantime, all faculty and staff should prepare personal disaster plans for financial and essential needs during a disaster.

18. What if the university closes for a term? How will nine month faculty be paid?

If the university closes for a term, Academic Affairs will re-establish and communicate the academic year calendar. Pay will be adjusted for terms worked. Faculty can use sick leave as allowed by [Policy 6.27 Paid Leave Programs](#).



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Paid and Unpaid Leave During a University State of Emergency

- 19. If an employee has a very sick child or other very sick immediate family member at home and must stay home to care for them are they allowed to take time off?**

If the eLeave request for sick leave is consistent with the requirements of the Paid Leave Programs, Policy 6.27, then sick time should be granted.

Should the employee's leave be granted as FML?

It is the employer's responsibility to designate leave as FML when there is a known qualifying reason and the employee is eligible for FML (refer to Family and Medical Leave, Policy 6.05 for additional information).

- 20. What if I am completely out of sick leave and vacation leave?**

It is crucial that staff and faculty use their sick and vacation leave wisely. Sick time should be saved for those instances where you and/or your family members are ill. Sick and vacation leave balances must be exhausted prior to applying for unpaid leave (see [Unpaid Leave, Policy 6.45](#) for additional information).

- 21. Can we donate vacation or sick time to others during a University State of Emergency?**

If the donation of vacation time is consistent with the guidelines in [Paid Leave Programs, Policy 6.27](#), then vacation time can be donated. Sick time cannot be donated to others per state law.

- 22. Will my benefits continue if I must take an unpaid leave of absence?**

Faculty and staff will be billed for benefits contributions while on unpaid leave. Refer to [Benefits Continuation while on Approved Leave of Absence](#) for benefits information while on unpaid leave.

- 23. What happens during a disaster such as a flu pandemic when employees may not be able to get required paperwork from medical professionals regarding needed sick leave?**

Employees should follow the documentation noted by [Paid Leave Programs, Policy 6.27](#) and standard departmental practice. Depending on the situation, departments need to be flexible with documentation requirements and allow for an appropriate period of time to obtain and submit documentation.

- 24. When can I return to work if I have been out sick with an illness such as the flu during a pandemic? What sort of documentation do I need to provide that I am well?**

It is crucial to follow guidelines published by public health organizations regarding "social isolation" and when individuals can return to work without putting others at risk for infection. These guidelines will be made available on line should a pandemic occur. Do not return to work before published medical guidelines inform you that you are safe to return. You will only place others at risk. Stay in touch with your department or check the [Ohio State](#) website if you have questions.

Safety and Disaster Preparedness Information

- 25. Where can I get information about travel safety guidelines?**



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Travel safety guidelines can be found on the U.S. Department of State's Travel website at travel.state.gov. Travel safety guidelines specific to pandemic or avian flu can be found on the U.S. Government Avian and Pandemic Flu website at pandemicflu.gov.

26. What can I do to prepare for an emergency such as a flu pandemic?

Save up your sick leave – it is a valuable resource. To understand more about a flu pandemic, and to prepare yourself and your family for it, read the resources on the U.S. Government Flu website at www.cdc.gov/flu/.

If you have child or eldercare responsibilities, talk with friends, family, and neighbors now. Chances are high that schools and child care centers will close, so it is crucial to prepare in advance for other ways to care for family members, friends, and neighbors.

27. If everyone is sick, or if a huge disaster has occurred, and I am required to work, how can I deal with child care or elder care when coming in to work?

We encourage you to plan now for emergencies. Each family should have an emergency plan. Refer to our [Disaster Work Life Guidelines](#), or the U.S. Government FEMA website at ready.gov.

Administrative Issues During a University State of Emergency

28. What are the timekeeping requirements during a University State of Emergency?

Normal timekeeping processes and record collection and retention will be expected as long as they are reasonably possible during a University State of Emergency. At the end of the disaster, units are responsible for ensuring that records are in alignment with internal control requirements. Follow these key steps when creating a disaster process:

- Departments must notify their employees of the timekeeping requirements and the method and frequency with which eLeave, timesheets or time reports must be submitted during a University State of Emergency.
- Non-exempt employees must keep a timesheet (electronic or hard copy) of dates and hours worked. Timekeeping records may be phoned in as long as a paper or electronic record that contains all the required information is created and maintained.
- Units may use eLeave or develop an alternate version that may include e-mail, fax, or phone submission. Depending on the situation, departments need to be flexible with documentation requirements and allow for an appropriate period of time to obtain and submit documentation.

29. How will internal controls be dealt with during a University State of Emergency?

Internal controls will remain in effect as long as is reasonably possible. The president, in consultation with the provost, vice presidents, and the vice president for human resources will determine if internal controls will be modified during a disaster and will communicate such a decision to the university community.

30. Where can I obtain additional information?

- Disaster Preparedness and University State of Emergency, Policy 6.17, online at hr.osu.edu/policies-forms
- Benefits Services, hr@osu.edu, 614-292-1050
- Employee and Labor Relations, hr-elr@osu.edu, 614-292-2800
- Payroll Services, payrolloffice@osu.edu, 614-292-2311