



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer

VA Central Office
Washington, DC

September 25, 2024

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER (OCHCO) BULLETIN

SUBJECT: Authority for Excusing Employees from Duty for Weather and Emergency Situations

This OCHCO Bulletin serves as a reminder to Human Resources (HR) offices regarding the VA policy on excusing employees from duty for weather and emergency situations.

Weather and safety leave may be authorized in accordance with VA Handbook 5011, Part III, Chapter 2, paragraph 12u and Chapter 3, paragraph 9o(12) when it has been determined an act of God (hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, etc.), terrorist attack, or another condition prevents the employee or a group of employees from safely traveling to, or safely performing work at, an approved work location.

VA employees may be excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave for weather and emergency situations, with proper approval authority, which is provided below.

Weather and Safety Leave	
The VA Secretary has the authority to approve excused absence for VA employees under any circumstance	
Central Office	
Scenario	Approval Authority
Excuse employees from duty, not to exceed 1 workday	Leave Approving Official
Excuse employees from duty in excess of 1 workday, not to exceed 7 consecutive workdays	Deputy Assistant Secretary (or equivalent), and their designee
Excuse employees in excess of 7 consecutive workdays	Under Secretary for each Administration, Assistant Secretaries of Staff Offices, Other Key Officials
Field Facilities	
Scenario	Approval Authority
Excuse employees from duty not to exceed 1 workday	Leave Approving Official
Excuse employees from duty in excess of 1 workday, not to exceed 7 consecutive workdays	Field Facility Heads
Excuse employees in excess of 7 consecutive workdays	Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Other Key Officials, or their designee

All excused absences for weather and emergency situations must be charged in the VA Time and Attendance System (VATAS) as:

- Weather and Safety: LN – Admin Leave, PS – Weather and Safety Leave

The approval of leave must include a description for which the determination is being made and the duration.

Emergency and telework-ready employees who are required to report for duty must follow local policies, including written telework agreements.

VA Requirement(s):

Telework-Ready Employees who are scheduled to perform telework on the effective day of the announcement, or who are required to perform telework on a day when Federal offices are closed, must telework the entire workday, or request leave or a combination of telework and leave. This requirement is in accordance with VA policies and procedures and is subject to any applicable collective bargaining requirements (as consistent with law) unless safety/security situations exist which do not allow for the performance of telework.

Emergency Employees are expected to report to their worksite unless otherwise directed by their supervisors.

Non-Emergency Employees will be granted weather and safety leave for the number of hours they were scheduled to work unless they are:

- required to telework,
- on official travel outside of the affected area,
- on pre-approved leave (including leave without pay), or
- on an alternative work schedule (AWS) day off

Employees Affected by Emergencies of Indefinite Duration: Where it is necessary to close operations for a prolonged or regularly recurring period, affected employees should be detailed or relocated for useful work to facilities where operations have not been curtailed. Please note that every effort should be made to keep employees at the affected facility.

Emergency Leave Transfer Program: The President may direct the Office of Personnel Management to establish an emergency leave transfer program to assist employees affected by an emergency or major disaster. The emergency leave transfer program permits employees to donate unused annual leave for transfer to employees of the same or other agencies who have been adversely affected by the emergency or major disaster and who need additional time off from work without having to use their own leave.

Evacuation Payments in Subsequent Emergency Situations: VA may provide advance payments, evacuation payments, and payments for travel and subsistence expenses to employees who are ordered to evacuate from an initial safe haven area to a second safe haven because of imminent danger to their lives as a result of a subsequent

emergency situation. In other words, the period of time covered by evacuation payments may be extended in the case of employees who are evacuated a second time because of a subsequent emergency situation.

Employees should contact their HR office with questions. HR offices with questions regarding this bulletin may contact the Worklife and Benefits Service at:

vaco058worklife@va.gov.

Issued by: VA/OCHCO/Worklife and Benefits Service