



Administrative Policy  
**SEVERE WEATHER AND OTHER EMERGENCY  
CONDITIONS**

A.P. No. 2-3

Effective Date: 07/06/2024

**1. POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of the City of Houston (City) that, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor, the City remain open for business to deliver City services during all scheduled and published hours of operations. Employees, unless otherwise directed, are expected to report for and remain at work as scheduled regardless of weather conditions or other emergency situations. Additionally, all City employees shall be designated as Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III employees to ensure City services and operations are delivered. Employee attendance and pay must be in accordance with the provisions outlined in this policy.

**2. POLICY PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish structures, mechanisms, assignments, and expectations to ensure the City can respond efficiently and effectively during a broad spectrum of emergencies, both natural and human-caused. All City employees are critical to the services and operations of their department. This policy describes the roles and responsibilities of employees before, during, and after severe weather and other emergency incidents.

**3. SCOPE**

This policy is applicable to all City employees (full time, part time, part time 30, and temporary) regardless of civil service status, classification, or pay grade.

**4. DEFINITIONS**

**Chain of Command:** The line of authority and responsibility along which directions, instructions, authorizations, and orders are passed. The chain of command typically begins with an employee's immediate supervisor, extends upward through all levels of management, and ends with the department director.

**Emergency:** Severe weather and other emergency incidents, which may or may not be declared by the Mayor, that pose an immediate risk to health, life, property, or environment. Most emergencies require urgent intervention to prevent a worsening of the situation, although in some situations mitigation may not be possible.

**Employee:** Any individual employed directly by the City or a contractor (temporary employee) directly supervised by the City engaged in the performance of duties for or on behalf of the City.

**Tier I:** Employees determined by department directors to be essential to the continued operation of critical City functions, including preparations and responses to emergencies. Tier I employees are expected to report as directed under any circumstances. Tier I employees are considered essential during the pre-, intra- and post-event periods and are required to carry out the responsibilities assigned to Tier I employees in Section 6, Procedures.

Approved:

Handwritten signature of John Whitman in black ink.

Date Approved:

07/15/2024

Page 1 of 6

Tier II: All employees without immediate, specific emergency roles but who may be necessary to execute duties for the City under certain circumstances. Tier II employees are considered essential during the pre-, intra-, and post-event periods and are required to carry out the responsibilities assigned to Tier II employees in Section 6, Procedures.

Tier III: All City employees not specifically designated as Tier I or Tier II employees. Tier III employees are required to carry out the responsibilities assigned to Tier III employees in Section 6, Procedures.

## **5. POLICY DETAILS**

- 5.1. All City employees directly provide or support others who provide services to the citizens of Houston. Many of these services are critically needed before, during, and immediately after an emergency. Because the Houston area periodically experiences severe weather conditions, it is understood that travel is sometimes very dangerous. All City employees are expected to fulfill their assignments in accordance with the City and department policies and practices.
- 5.2. In cases of emergency, the Mayor may determine that some or all non-essential City services will be suspended, requiring the presence of only designated employees. If conditions are severe enough to suspend non-essential City services, a public announcement will be made by the Mayor on local radio and/or television stations and department directors will be notified.
- 5.3. Each department shall establish a communication plan to keep employees informed regarding directives for status of emergency conditions and for reporting to work.
- 5.4. City employees should monitor the Houston radio and television stations for communications issued by the Mayor and their department to determine whether to report to work. Employees must contact their supervisor if they have any questions or need clarification of their responsibilities.
- 5.5. Each department director has the responsibility to designate employees (existing and future employees), including executive management, as Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III employees and shall submit a report indicating such designation to the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Human Resources Department (HR) on the first business day of May each year.
- 5.6. The authority to suspend non-essential City services and to direct or advise City employees not to report to their regular work location as a result of emergencies shall rest solely with the Mayor. Only the Mayor shall issue a proclamation directing City employees to work from their residence, as their temporary work location, during emergencies.

## **6. PROCEDURES**

All employees will be designated by their department directors or designees as Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III employees. These designations are based on the duties and responsibilities of the individual employee.

### **6.1. Tier I:**

- 6.1.1. All Tier I employees have specific duties to perform during preparation (if there is advance warning of the incident), the actual incident and the immediate post-incident period. Tier I employees will be identified, trained, and deployed to maintain required operations twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Tier I employees working in around-the-clock operations will be rotated off duty for rest and meals as staffing permits.
- 6.1.2. When there is advance warning, Tier I employees will be given city business time (paid time) in advance of an emergency to prepare themselves and to prepare or evacuate others for whom they are responsible. These employees may not be free to perform these duties during or in the immediate aftermath of the emergency. After these preparations are complete, Tier I employees shall report for duty.

- 6.1.3. Tier I employees' presence at their assigned posts is mandatory at the appointed time(s) and for required duration(s). Tier I employees may be assigned to their usual duty stations, other duty stations, designated rest areas (to prepare for the next assignment, as with round-the-clock shifts) or other locations as determined by the employees' supervisors or managers.
- 6.1.4. Tier I employees are responsible for contacting the designated supervisor or manager in their chain of command if they are physically prevented by circumstances beyond their control from reaching their assigned posts. Tier I employees must follow instructions from their supervisor or manager.
- 6.1.5. Failure to report and carry out assigned duties in the absence of prior approvals by their department directors or designees will result in disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

## 6.2. Tier II

- 6.2.1. All employees in pay grades 30 and above who have not been designated as Tier I employees are included in Tier II unless otherwise designated by the department.
- 6.2.2. When there is advance warning, Tier II employees will be allowed to leave work when told by an authorized supervisor or manager in their chain of command before an emergency in order to prepare themselves and to prepare or evacuate those for whom they are responsible. After such preparations are complete, Tier II employees shall be available for duty at the discretion of the chain of command.
- 6.2.3. Tier II employees must be prepared to report to work when and where directed as instructed by their supervisor, manager, or other authorized departmental official.
- 6.2.4. Failure to report and carry out assigned duties in the absence of prior approvals by their department directors or designees will result in disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

## 6.3. Tier III

- 6.3.1. When there is an advance warning, Tier III employees are to be released by an authorized supervisor or manager in their chain of command prior to an emergency to prepare.
- 6.3.2. Tier III employees are required to follow emergency instructions given by the civil authorities (including evacuation).
- 6.3.3. Tier III employees, including those who may have evacuated the Houston area, are subject to recall to duty. Because of the City's responsibility and obligation to ensure that infrastructure and critical services are repaired, restored, tested, and/or inspected prior to their return to regular operational status, Tier III personnel are required to remain available for recall, return to work as instructed, and remain until released from duty.
- 6.3.4. Once the City's Emergency Operations Center determines the emergency has subsided, all employees, unless otherwise directed by their supervisor, manager, or other departmental official, must report to their regular scheduled work assignment and location.

## 6.4. Exceptions

- 6.4.1. In extremely rare cases before, during, or after an emergency an employee may be excused from duty because of circumstances beyond their control that preclude performance of the duties and responsibilities required by his or her Tier assignment.

6.4.2. Each department director, in his/her sole discretion, may determine whether circumstances warrant excusing an employee from their required duties.

## 7. CONDITIONS

7.1. Conditions where the Mayor ***has not*** issued a directive instructing a City employee not to report to his/her regular work location.

### 7.1.1. Reporting to Work

7.1.1.1. An emergency may be citywide or localized (neighborhood specific). While conditions may make it difficult for an employee to report in a timely manner to his/her regular work location, all employees must still report to work as soon as possible.

7.1.1.2. An employee should exercise his/her best judgment regarding his/her individual situation, making every reasonable effort to report to work.

7.1.1.3. If an employee will be late or is unable to report to work, he/she must immediately notify his/her supervisor of his/her availability for reporting to work in accordance with Administrative Procedure (AP) 3-11, Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

### 7.1.2. Leave Time and Compensation

7.1.2.1. If an employee is late or cannot report to work and has satisfied his/her supervisor that weather conditions prevented him/her from reaching his/her regular work location as scheduled, supervisors, in accordance with applicable laws and City and department policies, may allow the employee to make up the missed time or allow the employee to use accrued paid leave time.

7.1.2.2. If an employee does not satisfy his/her supervisor that an emergency prevented him/her from reaching his/her regular work location as scheduled, he/she may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension. However, the employee may be allowed to use accrued paid vacation leave time for the time absent from work. The employee may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with City and/or department policies.

7.2. Conditions where the Mayor ***has*** issued a directive suspending non-essential City services and directing a designated City employee not to report to his/her regular work location.

### 7.2.1. Reporting to Work

7.2.1.1. While an emergency may make it difficult for an employee to report in a timely manner to his/her regular work location, all employees must still report to work as soon as possible.

7.2.1.2. An employee should exercise his/her best judgment regarding his/her individual situation, making every reasonable effort to report for work.

7.2.1.3. If an employee will be late or is unable to report to work, he/she has the responsibility to immediately notify his/her supervisor of his/her availability for reporting to work in accordance with AP 3-11, Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

### 7.2.2. Mandatory Evacuation

7.2.2.1. Should circumstances require citizen mandatory evacuation, department directors shall make all reasonable efforts to take appropriate action (such as providing food and lodging) for employees who are required to be at work and who live in the evacuation zone(s).

7.2.2.2. When employees remain at the assigned work location, work schedules and duties are at the discretion of the department director.

### 7.2.3. Leave Time and Compensation

7.2.3.1. Non-exempt employees who work during an emergency shall be compensated for the hours physically worked based on his/her regular pay plus appropriate overtime per City of Houston Code of Ordinances, Section 14-168.

7.2.3.2. Exempt employees who work during an emergency may be compensated for the time worked based on his/her regular salary and may be eligible for earned compensatory time per City of Houston Code of Ordinances, Section 14-168.

7.2.3.3. A non-exempt employee may make up any scheduled work time at the discretion of the department director. All hours must be made up during the current workweek or any shortfall of regular hours may be charged to the appropriate accrued leave. In all cases, a non-exempt employee is to be fully compensated for all hours actually worked.

7.2.3.4. Generally, an exempt employee will not be docked for time not worked during an emergency. However, exempt employees who fail to report to work or perform their duties as directed will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

7.2.3.5. An employee who does not report to work and has not satisfied his/her supervisor or manager that an emergency prevented him/her from reporting to work, or leaves work without proper authorization is subject to disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension. An employee may still be permitted to use accrued vacation leave.

7.2.3.6. If, at any time the Mayor directs an employee to work at his/her residence as his/her temporary work location, and an employee is on approved scheduled paid leave, such as vacation, such time **will not** be changed from paid vacation to regular pay.

7.2.3.7. When the Mayor declares that only essential services and/or limited City services are open to the public, the Director of the Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department shall provide departments with the appropriate emergency paid leave code and instructions on its application.

7.2.3.8. The Mayor may declare special pay conditions for employees who served either before, during, or immediately after an emergency. Specific policies and/or guidelines to administer such special pay conditions must be approved by the Mayor or designee prior to the event or occurrence.

## 8. COMPLIANCE

8.1. Departments shall report at least once a year (the first business day of May) employee personnel Tier designations to HR and OEM. In addition, departments should clearly communicate the designation to each employee and obtain a written acknowledgement from the employee. Each employee is required to make every reasonable effort to know and understand the responsibilities associated with his/her designation.

8.2. An employee not in compliance with this policy or his/her departmental policies and practices shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension, as determined by the department director.

8.3. In the event this policy conflicts with another City departmental policy, during an emergency this policy will be controlling. This policy may also be applied to other crises at the discretion of the Mayor.

## 9. POLICY SPONSOR

**Department:** Office of Emergency Management