Guidelines for Essential Functions in Case of a Campus Emergency

Category: OPERATING POLICIES
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Policy Statement

These guidelines are intended to provide guidance to departments and schools in determining essential functions and staff/faculty during a campus emergency.

Reason(s) for the Policy

This policy provides guidelines for the identification, treatment of time, and use of “Essential Personnel” during campus emergencies, including those that dictate suspension of services and/or closure of operations. During an emergency, Essential Personnel provide services that relate directly to the health, safety, and welfare of the University, ensure continuity of key operations, and maintain and protect University properties.

Who Is Governed by This Policy

All Columbia University faculty and staff.

Who Should Know This Policy

All Columbia University faculty and staff should know and understand this policy.

Exclusions & Special Situations

None

Policy Text

These guidelines are intended to provide assistance to departments and schools in determining which faculty and staff are essential during a campus emergency based on essential functions needed. Each department and school is responsible for final determinations as to which of its personnel are essential. Essential Personnel are generally defined as the faculty and staff who are required to report to their designated work location, to ensure the operation of essential functions or departments during an emergency or when the University has suspended operations. There are some individuals who may be required to perform essential services remotely and those individuals will be identified in advance and notified by their supervisors, but in most cases Essential Personnel are expected to be on-site.
Senior Management in each department and school should determine which functions are essential, and how to staff those functions during an emergency or suspension of normal operations. Once the essential staffing plan for a department is determined the senior manager in the department is responsible for communicating the information to all personnel in the respective department.

**Essential Functions/Departments**

The following is a list of identified functional areas that are considered essential. Please note that this list is not intended to be all inclusive. Additionally, on a case by case basis, staff members may be designated as essential by management based on the nature of the emergency and/or the availability of other personnel. If you have any question whether your position is deemed essential please contact your supervisor.

- Officers of Instruction, Officers of Research and Officers of the Libraries (as determined for continuance of research and or instruction)
- Researchers involved in animal care or working with material that require refrigeration
- Office of Communications and Public Affairs
- Student & Administrative Services Communications Team (core emergency team)
- Columbia Dining
- Public Safety
- All Facilities Services
- Columbia Housing
- Columbia Health
- CUIT (web, email, telephone, data networks and computer operations)
- Treasury/Controller
- Procurement (Emergency purchasing and processing)
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Institute of Comparative Medicine (ICM)
- Government and Community Affairs
- Senior-level Central Administrative Officers as required

Until a decision is made by the Emergency Management Operations Team (EMOT) about the nature and extent of the emergency, all management (administrative and academic officers) should be considered critical to the function of the University. Thereafter, management will determine and communicate which functions are essential and if any Essential Personnel will be excused from reporting to work. Dismissal of classes and/or cancellation of events do not necessarily mean that the campus operations shut down completely as students remain on campus and staff are needed to continue to work.

*Essential Personnel are expected to come to work in emergency situations unless they are specifically excused by their departments. Failure to report to work as directed may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.*
Ultimately, the nature of the emergency will determine what services should continue and who is essential to the continued operation of the campus. The Emergency Management Operations Team (EMOT) will provide up-to-date instructions and communicate the decisions of the University Leadership (Response Leadership Team) through various communications means including: Columbia University Home Page, Emergency Text Messages, community-wide email announcements, and voice messaging on the University’s main telephone line.

**Treatment of Time**

- Non-essential personnel, who report for work during campus emergencies, may be temporarily assigned to other tasks. Those reporting to work will be paid for the day at current salary/pay rate and may be released to go home by their supervisor unless they are instructed to remain and provide essential services.
- All applicable employment policies will remain in effect for employees who report to work.
- Please refer to the appropriate Collective Bargaining Agreement or contact Labor Relations for questions regarding union support staff.

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