

Policy 1309

University Closings, Class Cancellations and Exam Postponements Due to Inclement Weather or Emergencies

Date of Current Revision: June 2008

Responsible Offices: Director of Human Resources, Vice President and Provost for Academic Affairs, Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process by which the university may close or cease parts of its operation in response to inclement weather or emergencies.

2. AUTHORITY

The Board of Visitors has granted the President with responsibility for the university's safe and efficient operation and the authority to dictate policies and procedures in that effort.

3. DEFINITIONS

Authorized closing:

The closing of university operations, as determined by the President or a designee, for specific periods of time as needed. An authorized closing may be for an entire shift or a partial shift, such as in the case of delayed openings or early closings.

Designated Employee:

Those employees identified by the employing department whose work is essential to university operations and are required to work during periods of authorized closings.

Emergency conditions:

Those conditions, as determined by the President or a designee, that severely hamper employees from traveling to and from work, reporting to or remaining at work (such as inclement weather, utility failure, sustained flu pandemic, fire or other forced evacuations).

Non-designated Employee:

Those employees who are not required to work during periods of authorized closings. For purposes of identification in media announcements, these employees will be identified as 'Non-designated employees.'

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all JMU employees.

5. POLICY

James Madison University is primarily a self-contained campus with a large number of residential students requiring a variety of support services, regardless of inclement weather conditions or emergency situations. For the safety and well-being of its student and employees, the university may close or limit its services based on inclement weather or other emergencies.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1 CLOSING DECISIONS

Decisions to close university operations (those operations that do not operate in emergency or inclement weather conditions) will be made by the President or a designee. Individual vice presidents, deans, directors, department heads and supervisors are not authorized to make closing decisions in their areas. The President or a designee may make such a decision at any time during the calendar year to protect the best interest and welfare of the university community. Should inclement weather or emergency conditions dictate that the university operate with only inclement weather or emergency operations services, one of the following procedures will be followed:

- Inclement weather or emergency conditions that occur between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.
 - When a drastic change in weather conditions or an emergency situation occurs between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., the Office of Public Safety, in cooperation with state and local police, the director of facilities management, and other staff personnel, gathers information on conditions and informs the Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance. The Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance provides the President with a recommendation and the President determines whether non-inclement weather staff operations will close.
 - If the decision to close is made, the Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance notifies the Director of Public Affairs and University Spokesperson. The Director of Public Affairs and University Spokesperson and his/her staff place appropriate announcements on:
 - JMU Weather Line (540) 433-5300
 - JMU radio station 1610AM
 - [JMU's home page](#)
 - Area radio and television stations.
 - If the university is open at the time the announcement is made, division heads will make arrangements for contacting departments within their divisions. Announcements made during the time period affect early closings for first shift employees and possible shift closings for employees who work other than first shift. Announcements will include the following:
 - Start and stop times of shift closings;
 - Reference to all shifts affected by the closing;
 - Reference to Saturday and Sunday closings, as appropriate.
- Inclement weather and emergency conditions that occur between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m.
 - The same procedure as outlined above is followed. The Director of Public Affairs and University Spokesperson and staff place notifications as noted above by 9:00 p.m. Announcements are made in time to inform night shift employees whose start time is 10:30 p.m.
- Inclement weather or emergency conditions between 11 p.m. and 8 a.m.
 - The Office of Public Safety gathers information concerning the conditions and contacts the Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance by 5:00 a.m. The Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance notifies the Director of Public Affairs and University Spokesperson who makes appropriate notifications as noted above by approximately 5:30 a.m. Announcement of the decision should be made as soon as possible to inform employees whose shift begins at 6:30 a.m. Procedures should be developed within each department to notify employees whose shifts begin prior to 6:30 a.m.

6.2 CLASSES & EXAMS

Decisions to close university operations will be made by the President or a designee. If the decision to close is made, announcements will be made on JMU radio station 1610AM, on the [JMU Home Page](#), on the JMU Weather Line (540) 433-5300 and on area radio and television stations.

When it is necessary to cancel classes due to weather or other emergency, faculty members have several options for making up missed instructional time.

- Hold class on the official university make up day, which will be designated as part of the closing announcement.
- Hold class at another time acceptable to class members. The department will arrange time and location.
- Hold class electronically, using a web-based source such as [Blackboard](#)
- Accommodate for the missed instructional time within remaining class meeting time.

Final Examinations Missed or Rescheduled Due to Inclement Weather or Emergency Closing

In response to inclement weather and other emergencies, the university may be forced to cancel or reschedule final examinations. Decisions to close university operations will be made by the President, or a designee. If the decision to close the university and reschedule final examinations is made, announcements will be made as noted above.

When the university closes due to weather or other type of emergency, faculty will administer regularly scheduled examinations at a time designated by the university unless otherwise announced in the course syllabus. The official make up time will be designated as part of the closing announcement. Unless otherwise notified, examination locations will be the same as the location for the regularly scheduled exam.

If it is determined that exams cannot be given because of inclement weather or other emergency, faculty will assign final grades to students based on the exams, tests and projects completed prior to the regularly scheduled exam date.

6.3 FACULTY & STAFF

It is the policy of James Madison University to provide classified staff members pay continuity for absences necessitated by the authorized closing of operations due to inclement weather conditions or other emergencies such as utility failure, fire and other forced evacuations.

- Designated Staff employees who work their normally scheduled shifts during an authorized closing, whether an entire shift closing or a partial shift closing, will be credited with compensatory leave for those hours worked.
- Designated Staff employees required to work in excess of the hours in their normally-scheduled shift will be compensated in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act for the excess time worked (i.e., overtime payments), provided they are in a non-exempt classification.
- Designated Staff employees who do not report to work as scheduled must charge time missed to annual, sick, compensatory leave, or leave without pay as appropriate.
- Employees are expected to report to work on time. However, when conditions create transportation difficulties that result in late arrival of classified employees, supervisors may authorize up to two hours of such lost time as an authorized absence not charged as leave. Supervisors should decide each case on its own merits.
- Corrective action for failure to report may be taken under the Standards of Conduct and Performance policy.
- Employees who are on approved leave with pay for an authorized closing day will not be charged leave for the day.
- Annual, sick, compensatory leave or leave without pay must be charged, as appropriate, when a designated employee leaves before the end of the shift during an authorized closing.

Wage (part-time employees)

- Wage employees who are considered Designated Staff under the provisions of this policy will receive an additional half-hour pay for each hour they work during an authorized closing.
- If an authorized closing falls on a wage employee's regularly scheduled day off, the employee will not report to work and will not be paid nor receive compensatory time for the day.

6.4 COMPENSATION FOR AN ENTIRE SHIFT CLOSING – NON DESIGNATED EMPLOYEES

- To be eligible for pay, Non Designated Staff employees must work or be on paid leave the work day before and the work day after the authorized closing.
- Employees who are eligible will be paid for the hours they are scheduled to work, as follows:
 - Non-exempt ('hourly') employees will be paid for the number of hours they were scheduled to work during the authorized closing
 - Exempt ('salaried') employees will be paid for a full day for each full day the University is closed during an authorized closing
 - Employees who work an alternate schedule will be paid for the hours they were scheduled to work during the authorized closing. If an employee's normal work schedule is more than the period of the authorized closing, the additional hours not worked must be charged to leave or leave without pay as appropriate or be worked at a later time in the same workweek.

Example

A full-time employee (40 hours per week) is scheduled to work four ten-hour days Monday through Thursday. An entire shift closing is authorized for the first two shifts on Monday and for the first shift only on Tuesday. The employee will be paid for ten hours on Monday and eight hours on Tuesday. The additional two hours on Tuesday that the employee was scheduled to work beyond the end of the shift closing must be charged to leave balances or to leave without pay as appropriate.

Another alternative, subject to the supervisor's approval, would be to adjust the employees' work schedule to work an additional two hours later in the same workweek.

- Employees who are on approved leave with pay for an authorized closing day will not be charged leave.
- Employees who report to work as a result of not having heard the shift closing announcement will be paid their regular rate of pay but shall not be credited with compensatory leave except in extenuating circumstances approved by the President or designee.
- Employees whose resignations are effective the day of an all-day closing will not qualify for payment, and the separation will be effective the last actual day worked unless the closed day falls on the last workday of the pay period.
- In the event of an authorized closing, a supervisor may change the status of any classified staff member to Designated Staff based on the needs of the university. The compensation guidelines relative to the new status would apply.

6.5 COMPENSATION FOR A PARTIAL SHIFT CLOSING – NON DESIGNATED EMPLOYEES

- Employees who are on pre-approved leave with pay or who contact their supervisor requesting leave (and it is approved by the supervisor) on the day of a partial shift closing shall have only the hours of operation charged to their leave balances.
- Employees are expected to be at work on time. However, when conditions create transportation difficulties that result in late arrival of employees, supervisors may authorize up to two hours of such lost time as an authorized absence not charged as leave. Supervisors should decide each case on its own merits.

- Employees who are allowed to leave work prior to an announcement of an early closing must charge the difference between that time and the official closing time to leave balances or leave without pay.

7. RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of senior vice presidents, division heads, academic deans, department heads, directors and supervisors to ensure that the provisions of this policy are reviewed with employees and administered to all employees in a consistent manner.

Management should inform appropriate employees in writing that they will be required to work during authorized shift closings. It is recommended that these employees ('Designated Staff') be notified at the time of employment, or annually just prior to the winter season, or when it can be predetermined that for certain types of emergencies these employees' services will be necessary.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide accurate time and leave information to Human Resources.

8. SANCTIONS

Sanctions will be commensurate with the severity and/or frequency of the offense and may include termination.

9. EXCLUSIONS

Not applicable

10. INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the President, and is generally delegated to the Director of Human Resources.

Previous version: November, 2006
Approved by the President: January, 2003

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