

Act of God / Declaration of Emergencies - Service Talk

As we approach (or, are in) the winter season, it is time to discuss adverse weather conditions and employee responsibilities.

I want to genuinely thank everyone - our delivery and processing operations, our employees who keep our vehicles and machines humming, and our maintenance folks who keep our lots plowed, dock areas clear and sidewalks safe for our customers. We deliver for our customers: cards, checks, valuables, important documents and letters. We meet their needs by dropping medications in their mailboxes despite the weather.

This is the caliber of service customers deserve, expect and receive.

We have received questions from employees about reporting to work when local and state governments declare emergencies, as the District has experienced several times in recent years.

Attendance requirements are covered by the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM). Employees are required to be regular in attendance as per Section 666.81. As soon as the inability to report for duty becomes apparent, employees must notify their supervisor or follow the standard call-out procedures.

As per ELM 511.43, Employees are expected to maintain their assigned schedule and must make every effort to avoid unscheduled absences. In addition, employees must provide acceptable evidence of absences when required.

With that being said, all employees must take reasonable precautions and not jeopardize personal safety in an effort to report for work. The Postal Service does not expect any employee to endanger himself/herself trying to get to work. Naturally, this includes conditions experiencing snow and ice, as we have previously encountered, and also individual circumstances such as the employee whose home was flooded and street was closed when a water main broke in the summer of 2013.

Employees may request annual leave or leave without pay (LWOP) when such unfortunate events occur or when Mother Nature severely interferes with their commute.

The Postal Service is considered an essential public service and usually is not bound by states of emergency declared by local and state authorities. Postal employees are held to a higher standard than the general public. However, if an employee is directed by local authorities to return home or take a detour, then those instructions must be heeded. Again, employees may request annual leave or LWOP in such instances.

While the ELM does provide for administrative paid leave (the absence from duty authorized by appropriate postal officials without charge to annual or sick leave or leave without pay, ELM 519.1), the criteria are very restrictive and the special conditions must be an "Act of God" or Civil Disorder. Examples would be community disasters such as fire, flood or storms that are general in scope and impact, and prevent groups of employees from working or reporting to work. Events that affect employees on a personal basis do not qualify for Administrative Leave.

Many factors affect the individual employee's commute: some have long commutes, others short, many rely on public transportation, some live on unimproved roads, and many live in rural areas. Usually, storms that hit the District impact employees in different ways depending on where they live, topography, road conditions and range and intensity of the storm.

To reiterate, all employees must make reasonable efforts to report for work as scheduled, despite adverse weather conditions. Employees may be asked to explain and/or document their efforts to report for duty, if they are unable to report. The Postal Service is a vital public service. The declaration of a local or state emergency is not an automatic excuse to be absent, and is not automatic authorization for Administrative Leave. Each situation will be evaluated on an individual basis. Do not place yourself in peril trying to report for duty. Follow your standard call-out procedure (*here inform the employees of whom to call - the local installation or IVR*) and request leave as appropriate.

Presented By: _____

Date/Time: _____