

**City of Amarillo**  
**Personnel Policies and Procedures**

Policy Title:           Emergency/Disaster

Policy Number:        1600

Effective Date:        April 1, 2020

Approved by:           Jared Miller, City Manager  
                              Mitchell Normand, Director of Human Resources

**I.       Purpose**

This policy provides guidelines for management and all employees in the event of a declared emergency or disaster (including a pandemic) at the federal, state or local level requiring activation of the City of Amarillo’s Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP). An emergency/disaster could disrupt continuity of essential City services due to significant and sustained employee absenteeism and supply chain interruptions, therefore this policy’s intent is to protect employees' health and safety as well as minimize the impact on the delivery of City services.

**II.      Definitions**

**Disaster:** The occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property that results from natural or man-made cause, including but not limited to: pandemic, tornado, fire, flood, wind, storm, water contamination, drought, infestation, explosion, civil disturbance, chemical accident, riot, terrorist activity, or other public calamity that threatens public health or safety.

**City Closure:** City Closure occurs when the City Manager orders the closure of all non-essential City offices. For continuity of operations, the City Manager may reopen individual offices without affecting the status of City Closure.

**Continuity of Operations Plan (“COOP”):** the planning document for each department that identifies critical or essential functions and the minimum resources needed to ensure a City department is able to continue operation of those functions under a broad range of circumstances including all-hazard emergencies as well as natural, man-made, and technological threats.

**Essential Personnel:** All City employees are key to the successful operation of the city; however, some employees may be identified as essential personnel during extreme emergency/disaster events. These employees may be required to work immediately before, during, or immediately after an emergency or disaster as required by the circumstances and determined by their Department Director.

**Telecommuting:** a mutually agreed upon arrangement between the employee and their manager and approved by the City Manager’s Office, in which an employee is approved to perform work duties from an alternative work site for a specified period of time.

**III.     Procedures**

- III.1   This policy is only effective upon activation of the City’s COOP or other activation by the City Manager or designee as related to a declared emergency/disaster and remains effective for the duration of the activation or until amended.
- III.2   The effects of the COOP and/or this policy will confer no new privilege, right of appeal, transfer, promotion, reclassification, compensation, or other right of position or status that is

- III.3 otherwise not part of the established City of Amarillo personnel rules and personnel policies. Each Department Director must endeavor to continue to maintain proper staffing levels and in priority order to maintain essential functions of your routine position or in such other position as may be assigned during the emergency/disaster. Staffing modifications must be coordinated through the City Manager's Office as necessary as circumstances change through the course of any emergency/disaster.
- a. To ensure continuity of operations, departments should plan for alternatives and options due to employee absenteeism and possible disruption of normal service delivery by the City or disruption of products and services by outside vendors.
  - b. If the emergency/disaster is widespread (regionally or nationally), outside governmental assistance may be compromised or limited.
  - c. Employee absenteeism may spike due to employee or family member illness, or closings of school, daycare, or eldercare facilities.
  - d. Directors/Managers will determine any specialized Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to maintain emergency operations.
  - e. City staff and/or resources may be required to provide services not currently performed as deemed necessary.

#### **IV. Staffing/Telecommuting/Work Assignments**

- IV.1 To ensure continuity of City operations during an emergency/disaster, departments may simplify processes temporarily in order to meet staffing and operational needs/requirements.
- IV.2 Departments shall rely upon one another as usual for decisions/assistance needed outside their expertise during an emergency/disaster or pandemic to make sound business decisions (e.g. use of Purchasing, Human Resources, Finance, City Attorney's Office, etc.).
- IV.3 Directors/Managers will be responsible for modifying work assignments, work hours or shifts, authorizing telecommuting, and any other necessary changes outside normal business practices to minimize interruption of critical essential services if needed.
- a. Such changes **shall** be closely coordinated with the City Manager's Office, Human Resources and Payroll staff to ensure operational efficiency, consistency and to ensure proper management of pay and pay types impacted by change.
- IV.4 **Telecommuting**
- a. Telecommuting may be considered and identified as an alternate work schedule by a Director/Division Manager during a declared emergency/disaster and/or activation of the COOP for certain essential functions.
  - b. Manager/Supervisor must receive approval first from their Department Director and then with the appropriate City Manager what, if any, essential functions and staff are deemed reasonable, practical and allowable for telecommuting.
  - c. Department Directors must obtain approval from the City Manager for each person recommended to be allowed to telecommute, prior to its commencement.
  - d. A telecommuting arrangement is not an entitlement and in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment; it can be revoked at any time for any reason with or without cause or explanation.
  - e. The City is not responsible for any costs associated with an employee's home office, however the City may provide certain equipment (such as laptop, cell phone, etc.) for the employee's use if available and as mutually agreed upon during the period authorized for telecommuting.
  - f. Departments should establish clear expectations for telecommuting employees including, but not limited to: expected hours, equipment, work production, timeliness, etc. as with any other employee.
    - 1) Employees will complete a form provided by Human Resources that clarifies: the reason for telecommuting request; justification of need; duties to be

performed; response hours and work production; acknowledging that staff members may be re-deployed or assist in other areas as needed outside of their normal functional area;

- 2) The employees and their direct supervisor who will be monitoring work assignments and accomplishments while telecommuting will acknowledge understanding of expectations via signature on the form;
- 3) Employee must exhibit to their Supervisor/Manager acceptable accountability, productivity and efficiency in the completion of work assignment while working remotely.

#### IV.5 **Positions/Assignments/Work Duties/Shifts:**

- a. During an emergency/disaster, employees may be temporarily reassigned, re-deployed, or transferred to a different position, shift, work location/worksites as deemed necessary by management in order to maintain essential services.
- b. Employees are expected to assist with the other duties as assigned during these unique circumstances.

#### IV.6 **High Risk Personnel**

- a. High Risk personnel for pandemic related disasters are those employees identified by a federal, state, and/or local public health authority as being at higher risk of getting sick from an identified illness. This typically involves people with specific health conditions that put them at risk such as immune-suppressed individuals, those with heart or lung disease, etc. It may also include older individuals.
- b. High Risk personnel may be allowed (or to request) special accommodations through their chain of command for approval in alternate work environment, modified or alternate duties, work location or setting that minimizes exposure for the duration of the emergency/disaster COOP activation period or until immunity is acquired through vaccination or illness.

#### IV.7 **Overtime**

- a. All provisions of Personnel Policy 702 – “Overtime and Compensatory Time” for overtime/comp time provisions apply during a declared emergency/disaster. Employees may be expected to work outside of normal business hours for continuity of operations, especially if staffing shortages occur.
- b. Regardless of subsequent reimbursement opportunities, mechanisms and processes for tracking staff time, hours, and/or equipment/supplies during the emergency/disaster will be reviewed and revised as necessary. If required, Finance staff will notify personnel of the tracking procedures.
- c. Limitation on overtime hours work may be dictated for health/safety reasons as needed.

#### IV.8 **Compensation and Pay Exceptions**

- a. Full-time non-essential personnel will be paid straight time for their regularly scheduled work hours at their regular rate of pay while City services/operations are officially closed due to a declared emergency/disaster.
- b. All exempt employees (i.e. essential and non-essential) and all sworn public safety personnel will be subject to the standard compensation rules established by Personnel Policy 702 “Overtime and Compensatory Time” during a declared emergency/disaster.
- c. Full-time, General Schedule, non-exempt essential personnel will be paid their regular pay rate for their regularly scheduled work hours during a designated emergency/disaster. The standard compensation rules established by Personnel Policy 702 “Overtime and Compensatory Time” during a declared emergency/disaster will apply.

## V. Travel

- V.1 The City may restrict, modify, or revoke travel privileges related to city business during a declared disaster/emergency or pandemic. This may include travel previously approved.
- V.2 The City may impose restrictive return to work mandates that may require an employee to remain off duty for a defined period if there is a legitimate concern the employee may pose a health and/or safety risk to the workforce. If the employee is required to stay home, they may be required to apply an available accrual or leave without pay for their absence.

## VI. Public Health Procedures and Infection Control

- VI.1 In the event of a pandemic-related COOP activation, employees shall follow any recommendations for certain medical procedures, immunizations, practices, or assessments as recommended by public health and environmental health guidelines and approved through the City Manager's Office.
- VI.2 Supervisors/Managers in each department are responsible to assess the work environment to determine the occupational exposure risk for staff and the public related to facilities, public access, events, and venues, to mitigate risk and exposure where practical through safeguard measures and social distancing.
- VI.3 Employees shall follow all recommended provisions of the COOP or other imposed control measures to minimize employee's and the public's potential exposure to the disease.
- VI.4 Department Directors/Managers may limit citizen/volunteer access to public buildings, close a facility and/or control access to a single-entry point for infection control, with City Manager's prior approval.
- VI.5 City staff access via security badges/cards to certain areas of city buildings may be restricted or disabled temporarily for infection control where necessary.

## VII. Leave Related to an Emergency/Disaster

- VII.1 It is important that all employees understand the various pay and leave flexibilities that may be utilized during an emergency/disaster crisis, in order for employees to stay home when ill or for their safety, to care for a dependent, or their children's schools or childcare programs close, elder care facilities close, or facilities dismiss as a result of the emergency.
- VII.2 Employees are allowed to use sick leave, personal leave, compensatory time, floating holiday or leave without pay if an absence is due to reasons identified in VII.1 during the declared emergency/disaster COOP activation.
  - a. The City reserves the right to adjust its leave policies without prior notice and requests for leave are not guaranteed and are subject to supervisor approval.
- VII.3 For employees who are absent due to personal or family illness during a declared emergency/disaster (e.g. a pandemic) activation, FMLA may apply.
  - a. Management may require an employee to go home if symptomatic at work.
  - b. Employees who are symptomatic/ill may be sent home whether or not they have sufficient paid leave time accrued to cover the absence.
  - c. The City's Workers Compensation carrier will provide guidance as to injury reporting for any work-related identifiable exposures if different than normal practices.
  - d. Federal law allows an employer to require an employee to provide more detailed medical information about the employee's condition (or that of a family member) during a time of pandemic, than is normally allowed, in order to assess biological threats and better protect workplace safety and health conditions.
- VII.4 During an emergency/disaster situation, some employees may become concerned about reporting to work, for fear of exposure to themselves or their families.
  - a. Directors/Managers shall make reasonable efforts to educate employees and minimize unfounded concerns of exposure risks.
  - b. **With the potential high levels of absence during an emergency/disaster, it is**

**expected that all employees who are well, report for work.** Employees with childcare issues directly related to the emergency/disaster should work with their chain of command with Human Resources guidance to coordinate work accommodations as needed.

- c. Instances of employees refusing to report to work with no reasonable grounds will be treated as an unpaid unauthorized absence and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- VII.5 Modifications to leave use policies may be developed and outlined by Human Resources as deemed necessary to ensure continuity of operations during the emergency/disaster COOP activation period.
- VII.6 Directors and Managers reserve the right to temporarily suspend or cancel leave of well personnel, if their services are required in order to maintain delivery of critical essential City functions.

**VIII. Benefits**

- VIII.1 The City will strive to maintain Benefits during an emergency/disaster. The City reserves the right to modify any or all of its Benefits program without prior notice. Human Resources, through approval of the City Manager's Office, may temporarily change benefit provisions/costs.

**IX. Exceptions**

- IX.1 The City Manager reserves the right to void, modify, override, and/or supplement this policy at any time for any reason.