



# University Policy: University Facility and Personnel Operating Status

**Policy Category:** Operational Policies

**Subject:** American University operating status during emergencies

**Office Responsible for Review of this Policy:** Office of Finance and Treasurer

**Procedures:** [Emergency Closing/Cancellation Procedures](#), [Emergency Management and Continuity of Operations Plan](#), Departmental emergency operating plans

**Related University Policies:** Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Policy

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## I. SCOPE

American University (AU) may change its operating status during periods of inclement weather or other emergency situations. At such times, the University has a prescribed method for evaluation and communication of these changes to AU staff, faculty, and students. Academic and administrative units are expected to abide by any decision made by central administration regarding operating status.

## II. POLICY STATEMENT

American University wishes to protect the safety of its community members, research, and facilities. To that end, University operations may be reduced, suspended or closed due to weather conditions, facility damage, or other emergency conditions that prevent normal operations. The decision to reduce, suspend, or close all or part of the University because of severe weather, building conditions, disruptive actions, or health risks will be made by the President or his designee. The Office of the Vice President of Finance and Treasurer and the department of Human Resources will handle details and questions regarding this policy.

## III. DEFINITIONS

**Emergency Events:** Three levels of emergency events have been identified, relative to the magnitude of the emergency.

- **Level 1** – the emergency involves a localized department or building incident that can be quickly resolved with internal resources or limited help, and causes little or no disruption to operations or services. This level of emergency results in limited or no evacuation and has little or no impact on personnel or normal operations outside the locally affected area. An example of this level of emergency is a small-scale incident such as a lab spill or single injury that requires limited response from Public Safety, EHS, and Facilities Management. The primary decision-making responsibility rests with the department that would normally handle the situation. No university-wide action is required.

- **Level 2** – a mid-level emergency that disrupts sizable portions of the campus community and can no longer be managed using normal procedures. Level 2 emergencies are larger scale incidents such as a hazardous materials spill or reported fire that involve Public Safety, EHS, and Facilities Management and may require assistance from external organizations, such as DCFD. They may require a larger evacuation and may involve an entire floor or building. These events may escalate quickly, and may have serious consequences for life safety and/or mission-critical functions. The primary decision-making responsibility rests with the department that would normally handle the situation, but also requires a cooperative effort with other departments that are responding in support. The Emergency Response Team leader is notified in most instances and he/she will advise the President as appropriate.
- **Level 3** – a major incident that adversely affects the entire campus, and may also affect the surrounding community. Level 3 emergencies may require a major evacuation involving multiple buildings or the entire campus. The effect of the emergency is wide-ranging and complex and a timely resolution of disaster conditions requires broad cooperation and extensive coordination. An example of a Level 3 emergency is a major weather-related event that will result in a suspension of normal University operations. University personnel at the site of the emergency are responsible for those immediate emergency decisions necessary to protect life and property and to stabilize the situation until the Emergency Response Team Leader has been apprised of the situation. Only the President or his designee can declare a Level 3 emergency.

**Emergency Response Team:** Team members, identified in AU’s Emergency Management and Continuity of Operations Plan (provide link to the Plan), have responsibility for overseeing the recovery and continuity processes being executed by the response teams in the field. They are responsible for communicating the recovery status to the Cabinet and making the necessary management decisions to support the recovery efforts. The Emergency Response Team Leader has overall responsibility for the team and communications with the Cabinet and/or the President.

**Priority Categories of Critical/Essential Personnel:** Personnel classified into priority categories as a means of determining the order of need during emergencies. Emergency response priorities may change depending on the crisis situation; however, the following basic order is used when determining who should report to campus. Department heads are responsible for designating critical/essential personnel and notifying those employees prior to or at the time an emergency situation occurs.

- **Priority Category A** – is the most restrictive and includes only those personnel whose **daily presence** on campus is necessary for **life safety and security**. For example, public safety staff, and facilities management personnel who maintain utilities. These personnel would be the first to receive protective equipment and preventative measures in situations that require immediate suspension of all normal teaching, research and service activities.
- **Priority Category B** – includes personnel needed to maintain **critical infrastructure and safety with intermittent on-campus presence**. This, too, is associated with suspension of all normal teaching, research and service activities. If research operations are suspended, for example, personnel must attend to animal care, safety, maintenance of perishable materials, and protection of records and data. Additionally, if the residence halls remain occupied during the emergency situation, **food service and housekeeping services** must be maintained.

- **Priority Category C** – personnel needed for the continuation of **critical business operations** (as opposed to infrastructure and safety) and includes personnel whose support can be performed from remote locations or with brief, occasional visits to campus. This Category includes personnel needed to resume normal teaching and research operations. It also includes core business units fundamental to the ongoing operations of the campus and university (e.g., human resources, financial management, mail services, etc.). Flexible work arrangements are based on office needs and subject to supervisor’s approval.

***Operating Status of the University:*** The operating status of the university will be determined by evaluating the condition of the campus, the condition of roads and public transportation in the area surrounding the campus, and the predicted ongoing impact of the emergency situation. An announced decision will reflect one of the following choices:

- **Open** – The University is open as usual with all services normally provided.
- **Open with Unscheduled Leave for staff and Discretionary On-Site Presence for faculty—**
  - **STAFF**—unscheduled leave provides all staff not designated as essential the option of utilizing annual leave without the leave being previously scheduled and approved in advance by their immediate supervisor. Nonessential staff must inform their supervisors of their intent to take unscheduled leave.
  - **FACULTY**—at the discretion of individual faculty, classes may continue on-site as scheduled, be cancelled, or be held on-line. It is the responsibility of faculty to notify their students of the option chosen.
- **Closed (Category A and Category C)** – Classes are canceled and administrative offices are closed, and residence halls are unoccupied. Only designated Category A “critical/essential” personnel are expected to work on campus. Category C employees may work remotely, as needed and as approved by their supervisors. **NOTE:** Faculty should notify their students if individual classes will continue on-line.
- **Closed (Category B and Category C)** – Classes on campus are canceled and administrative offices are closed, but students remain in the residence halls. Only designated Category B “critical/essential” personnel are expected to work on campus. Category C employees may work remotely, as needed and as approved by their supervisors. **NOTE:** Faculty should notify their students if individual classes will continue on-line.
- **Delayed** – If conditions are unsafe in the early hours but expected to improve through the day, the University may delay opening.

#### **IV. POLICY**

##### Operating Status

An emergency event at AU may be designated a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 emergency. The designated emergency Level is considered when the operating status of the University is determined. Please refer to the [Emergency Closing/Cancellation Procedures](#). When an operating status decision is announced, it will apply to all activities in all University facilities, including the Main campus, Tenley campus, Law School, and other off-campus buildings. Activities at all other locations will be governed by the operating status of that location. This Policy and the decision-making process are in effect seven days a week and apply to all University activities.

American University's operating status will be communicated through RAVE text alerts, AU's home webpage, and/or AU's telephone information line. AU's telephone information line is (202) 885-1100. It will provide general information on the University's operating status and detailed schedule information for essential services.

To the extent possible based on the nature of the emergency, operating status announcements will be made no less than 3 hours prior to the time of scheduled events so that students and employees can make appropriate arrangements (weekend class announcements follow the same guidelines as weekdays).

### Essential Services/Functions

In the event the University is closed, certain essential services/functions will still be provided. Essential functions and the personnel needed to maintain those functions need to be determined on a situational basis. Adjustments to schedules and services will be announced on the telephone information line (202) 885-1100. Each department/unit head shall designate essential functions and designate the employees to staff those functions according to the announced operating status of the University, the Level of emergency, and the Priority Categories of the department's critical/essential personnel. Voice mail messages of individual department lines should be updated to reflect the operating status of that department. The supervisor in charge of a particular unit can also determine which staff are essential and provide specific instructions about when and where employees are to report for work.

Except for buildings housing essential personnel, all buildings will be closed and secured; all activities/classes will be canceled. Public Safety officers cannot provide access for employees who do not have keys to their buildings because of their additional safety responsibilities during an emergency closing.

### Leave and Compensation

Full-time staff excused due to an emergency closing or delay will be paid for the days and hours they were scheduled to work, at their regular rate of pay. **Only those non-exempt employees categorized as essential and responding to the relevant emergency situation will receive an additional hour's pay for each hour worked during an emergency closing period.** Part-time staff will not be compensated for time lost due to a closing. The effective times of emergency closing periods are as follows:

- Closed for the entire day – from 6:00 a.m. on the day of closing until 6:00 a.m. the following day.
- Closed during the day – from the announced time of closing until 6:00 a.m. the following day.
- Delayed opening – from 6:00 a.m. until the time of the announced opening. If a delayed opening is changed to a closing, the emergency pay period is extended to 6:00 a.m. the following day.

NOTE: American University reserves the right to modify the Leave and Compensation portion of this Policy as it deems appropriate after considering the circumstances surrounding a specific emergency closing situation.

### Failure of critical/essential Employees to Report

Full-time employees designated as critical/essential due to an emergency closing or delay may be excused from work subject to the provisions of the University's Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Policy.

Individuals designated as critical/essential employees may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, for willful failure to report for or remain at work during an emergency closing or delay. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine appropriate action.

