

RESOLUTION 2022 978

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BENTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON:

IN THE MATTER OF ADOPTING THE BENTON COUNTY INCLEMENT WEATHER AND EMERGENCY CLOSURE POLICY

WHEREAS, Benton County desires to adopt an Inclement Weather and Emergency Closure Policy to be followed in cases of inclement weather and other cases warranting closure; and


WHEREAS, certain operations in the County must provide full or partial service levels at all times, regardless of, or because of, inclement weather or emergent situations and the attached Policy outlines the 24-Hour and Essential Services, including full or partial service levels; and

WHEREAS, the attached Policy designates the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners as the authority to determine when conditions warrant authorization of a closure of County offices and/or departments and services, and when the Chair is unavailable, the alternate authorities; and

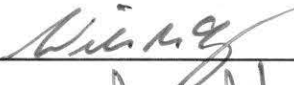
WHEREAS, the attached Policy also outlines Court Closures, Notification, Employee-Initiated Time Off, and Pay During Closure; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Benton County Commissioners hereby approves the attached Benton County Inclement Weather and Emergency Closure Policy, to be effective upon execution, and that any and all prior inclement weather and/or emergency closure policies are hereby repealed and superseded by this Benton County Inclement Weather and Emergency Closure Policy.


Dated this 20 day of December 2022



Chairman of the Board



Chairman Pro-Tem



Member

Constituting the Board of County Commissioners of Benton County, Washington

Attest: 
Clerk of the Board



Board of County Commissioners

BENTON COUNTY INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY CLOSURE POLICY

I. PURPOSE and SCOPE

The County is simultaneously a major employer and an agency responsible for providing many critical services in emergency situations, including those caused by inclement weather, as well as other emergent situations. The County has a responsibility to its employees as well as the citizens of Benton County, and others, when conditions become hazardous. This policy prescribes how the County will respond during periods of extreme inclement weather and other emergencies, and how staffing and compensation will be handled in these situations, to ensure a balance between employee safety and staffing needs.

An inclement weather situation is generally one in which snow, ice, or other conditions present a significant hazard to employees and citizens traveling to and from County facilities. This policy will be followed in cases of inclement weather and other cases warranting closure, including but not limited to, natural disaster, hazardous material releases, threats to County buildings and/or employees and/or the public, and others.

II. 24-HOUR and ESSENTIAL SERVICES

1. Certain operations in the County must provide full or partial service levels at all times regardless of, or because of, inclement weather or other emergent situations.
 - a. These operations include: Sheriff's Patrol, Corrections, Juvenile Detention, Coroner, and Road Maintenance.
2. Some operations must provide full or partial service levels prior to the opening of County offices because of inclement weather or other emergent situations.
 - a. These operations include: Security and Facilities.
3. Some operations may be required to provide full or partial service levels in order to fulfill a statutory obligation regardless of inclement weather or other emergent situations.
 - a. These operations may include: Payroll, Courts, Clerk's Office, Fairgrounds/Event Center staff, and Information Technology.

4. Elected officials and department managers with responsibility for these operations, or their designees, will determine what services and staffing must be maintained in inclement weather and other emergent situations, even if one or more County offices/departments are closed due to weather or an emergent situation.
 - a. Emergency closure pay is only authorized under this policy when a county closure is authorized *and* an elected official or a department manager, or their designee, declares a shutdown of selected operations.

III. COUNTY OPERATIONS CLOSURES

1. The Chair of the Board of County Commissioners retains authority to determine when conditions warrant authorization of a closure of County offices and/or departments, and services.
 - a. If the Chair is unavailable, the Chair *Pro Tem*, followed by the Commission Member, may intercede, following the procedures outlined in this policy.
 - b. The County Administrator, or if unavailable, the Deputy County Administrator, is empowered to authorize a closure if all County Commissioners are also unavailable.
2. Once a closure authorization order has been issued, elected officials and department managers, or their designees, are authorized to determine which services and facilities will remain open to provide critical or emergency services.
 - a. Elected officials are encouraged to develop written policies addressing the specific operations in their offices, following the general requirements as designated in this policy.
 - b. Department Managers shall develop, in partnership with County Administration, written procedures addressing the specific operations in their departments, following the general requirements designated in this policy.
 - c. Policies/procedures should address employee start time relative to County operation start time in the event of a delayed opening.
3. Employees scheduled for remote work at the time of the closure are not eligible for closure pay, unless their job duties rely on open County operations, as determined by the elected official/department manager.

IV. COURT CLOSURES

1. The County Administrator, or if unavailable, the Deputy County Administrator, will coordinate any closures with designated representatives for the courts and notification of court closures will be consistent with Section V of this policy.

2. Employees of the Benton-Franklin Superior Court are subject to Benton County Personnel Policies, including policies regarding pay for any court closure.

V. NOTIFICATION

1. County Administration shall publish and maintain an official notification procedure to be posted and distributed for reference by employees, vendors, and the public.
2. Every effort will be made to notify employees well in advance of a closure.
 - a. Dynamic weather and emergent situations may not always allow for significant advance notice, particularly with the varied schedules of County operations.
 - b. Employees can initiate time off in accordance with Section VI if a closure has not been called.

VI. EMPLOYEE-INITIATED TIME OFF

During times a closure order has been issued due to inclement weather and/or emergent situations, it is essential that the County continue to provide vital public services. It is expected that employees not authorized to remain home during a closure, make every reasonable effort to report to work without endangering their personal safety, or the safety of others.

1. Employees can request time off in the normal course if they believe that travel to or from work is hazardous or circumstances require them to take time off.
2. Paid leave can be used from an applicable leave bank, subject to elected official/department manager approval.

VII. PAY DURING CLOSURE

1. When a closure order is issued, employees not scheduled to be working remotely, will be paid for their scheduled shift and their personal leave banks will not be charged, provided such employees work the time during their scheduled shift in which their department/office was open. Closure pay shall be reported for such employees for the time their office/department was closed.
 - a. Employees who previously requested leave during the closure time, due to personal concerns or circumstances, or other qualifying events, are not eligible for closure pay, but are eligible for paid leave in accordance with Section VI.
2. Closure pay shall be reported in the payroll system for each eligible individual.
3. Closure pay shall not count as hours worked for the purposes of overtime calculations.

4. Closure pay is only authorized if the closure is authorized by the Board of County Commissioners in accordance with Section III of this policy, or as otherwise authorized by Section III of this policy, *and* a department/office declares a closure of selected operations.
 - a. If an elected official and/or department manager chooses to close their department/office for any length of time during regular business hours without Board of County Commissioners authorization, or pursuant to this policy, employees will be required to use their personal leave banks, in accordance with relevant policies, to cover the work time missed.

VIII. RECORDS RETENTION

The elected official or department manager is responsible for maintaining leave records for each employee, including but not limited to, records relating to the approval or denial of leave requests, in accordance with applicable document retention schedules.

IX. REPEALER

As of the date of adoption of this Inclement Weather/Emergency Closure Policy by the Board of County Commissioners, any and all prior inclement weather and/or emergency closure policies are hereby repealed and superseded by this Inclement Weather/Emergency Closure Policy.