



**King County**

# **KING COUNTY GUIDELINES FOR WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT IN AN EMERGENCY**

**Formerly the *All Hazards Manual for Emergency  
Response***

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## Preface

These guidelines provide agency management with a summary of planning, policy, and procedural guidance on personnel administration during an emergency or inclement weather. These guidelines are companion to each agency's Continuity of Operations Plan, which should specify essential services, lines of succession, alternative worksites, and emergency staffing plans for each essential service.

**If you are referring to this document during an emergency, please skip to page 15 for reference materials.**

If you have a question these guidelines do not answer, contact your Human Resources Manager, your Emergency Management Coordination Committee member, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Director's Office, or the Office of Labor Relations.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Department of Human Resources Deputy Director, or their designee, reviews and updates this manual annually and as needed, when experience demonstrates the need for adjusting the content. [The most recent version of this manual is kept on the HR Policies website.](#) This manual was last reviewed and updated March 2020.

## Who to Contact

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[Department Representatives for Emergency Management Coordinating Committee can be found here](#)

### **DHR Director's Office:**

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Contact information for [Department HR Managers can be found here](#)

### **Office of Labor Relations:**

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## Section 1: Planning for Emergencies and Inclement Weather

King County is responsible for providing services to more than 2.2 million people in King County. Various kinds of emergencies or inclement weather could disrupt the continuity of operations for provision of critical and other community services, including governmental and business functions. Emergencies may come in many forms of e.g. floods, earthquakes, or terrorism. Should an emergency seriously disrupt the continuity of county operations, the King County Executive may proclaim a county emergency. Non-essential services may be reduced to balance employee and community safety with the delivery of and demand for services to the community. Some worksites may close. An emergency may result in a significant absentee rate of King County employees. Ultimately, the nature of the emergency will determine what services will continue and which personnel are mission-critical to the continued operation of the county.

As part of the King County emergency planning process led by the Office of Emergency Management, each department and agency is responsible for developing a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). Through this planning process, departments and agencies fulfill their responsibility to identify essential functions, employee designations, lines of succession, alternative worksites, and emergency staffing plans. Once this planning has occurred, departments must communicate clearly to employees about expectations to report to work through a designation letter and should pre-bargain anticipated labor issues with the assistance of the OLR negotiator assigned to a particular contract.

Establishing which functions are essential and the required skills and staffing to provide those functions provides the backbone for employee designations. Employee designations impact expectations of employees in terms of their duty to report to work, scheduling, use of leave, absences, use of contingent workers, and provision of lodging and meals.

Emergency staffing and backfill of existing positions will be of primary concern in order to provide essential functions and some other services to the public. In the event that essential functions are adequately staffed then non-essential services may be staffed to the extent possible. Many human resources processes may be simplified and the administration of collective bargaining provisions narrowed as necessary to respond to the emergency event, as determined by the King County Executive, in order to meet exigent staffing needs.

The majority of King County employees are represented by labor unions. In the event that an emergency is proclaimed, there may be rare occasion where the temporary suspension of certain collective bargaining agreement provisions, for example notification timelines, is necessary. Anticipated issues should be discussed and negotiated with labor organizations during emergency planning and implemented only as necessary to respond to an emergency event.

These guidelines provide a checklist for the planning processes that will help King County employees and leadership be responsive and flexible in emergency conditions.

## Planning Checklist

Department leadership should use this checklist to ensure they have considered key aspects of staffing and personnel issues in case of emergency. The outputs of the planning process should be included as an appendix in each department's Continuity of Operations Plan and relevant information should be communicated to employees.

Emergencies are generally categorized as natural hazards, human-caused hazards or both natural and human caused hazards. King County is at risk for a number of different hazards, which are outlined in the [Hazard Mitigation Plan](#). For planning purposes, departments will want to plan for the differing impact of different emergency situations. Examples include:

- Natural disaster - tsunami, earthquake, major flood
- Weather-related - snow, wind, minor flood
- Biological/disease - epidemic, biological weapons
- Terrorism/active shooter
- Widespread technology/power failure

### **Determine Essential Functions and Personnel**

- Identify the department's first responder and additional essential functions. When identifying essential functions, agencies should consider critical times of year when certain functions must be performed (the discharge of certain essential work may be specific to the time of season, year or month or dependent on other factors directly affecting the function).
- Create anticipated staffing models for emergency operations (functions may require more staff than normal or fewer staff than normal).
- Designate First Responders: Determine personnel who perform first responder functions.
- Designate Mission Critical Employees: Determine personnel who perform essential services and determine whether the function can be performed via telecommuting.
- Designate Non-Mission Critical in an Emergency Employees: Identify employees who perform functions or services that may be suspended while personnel are assigned to roles that are more critical.
- Communicate to ensure each employee understands their designation, expectations, and whether they can telecommute. Make sure telecommute agreements are on file for the relevant employees.
- Identify and maintain a list of secondary personnel who have the skills and abilities to perform essential functions, even if outside their current assignment.
- Identify and maintain a list of other personnel, such as retired employees, former employees, temporary workers, or contract workers, who may be available to perform essential functions

- Identify and maintain a list of potential volunteers who have the skills to perform needed departmental functions.

### **Succession Planning**

- Establish a management line of succession plan which appoints alternates for key leadership positions in each department, division or work unit, especially those units that perform essential services/functions as identified in the COOP.
- Determine the individuals who will have the delegated authority to make decisions and *communicate* that succession plan to division and work unit personnel so they know who to take direction from during an emergency.
- Cross-train at least three employees in both payroll and HR management functions. These are essential functions.
- Provide for lines of succession for all department, division or work unit essential functions.
- Provide access to information and needed items to those in the line of succession (*i.e.* computer passwords, office keys, file cabinet keys, etc.).
- Submit division and section succession plans to the Department Director for inclusion in the COOP.

### **Review Business Hours, Work Schedules and Mode of Service Delivery**

- Review business hours and work schedules to determine if they can be modified in a manner that best promotes social distancing, business continuity or other emergency response goals.
- Identify essential functions that may be accomplished via telecommuting and whether the function needs access to all systems and applications or only email and/or voice communications.
- Identify locations where employees who need to stay close to the worksite can stay during inclement conditions and pre-arrange rates.
- Identify which first responders and mission critical employees will be required to stay near the worksite to perform their functions and how lodging and meals will be administered to these employees.
- Identify technical tools such as the employee emergency communications system, Virtual Private Network (VPN), Skype Messenger, and teleconferencing. Ensure adequate capacity of these systems to handle high volume in an emergency.
- Identify alternatives to technical tools in case the emergency has impacted power or telecommunications infrastructure.
- Ensure that essential reporting can be maintained. For example, departments should make sure that staff absenteeism can be monitored and reported.

### **Pre-bargain potential labor impacts**

- Communicate with the Office of Labor Relations to message to labor unions and employees that during the emergency, but only as necessary to respond to the emergency event, certain provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreement may be temporarily suspended such as, but not limited to:
  - Use of employees outside of the bargaining unit to perform the work
  - Previously approved vacation leave, compensatory time off, executive leave, and leave of absence without pay may be rescinded with minimal notice
  - Employees may be required to report for work with minimal notice
  - Employees' work schedules and/or hours of work may change with minimal notice
  - Employees may be asked to telecommute with minimal notice
  - Employees may be assigned overtime with minimal notice
  - Employees may be assigned work outside of class with minimal notice
  - Employees may be assigned to other work units with minimal notice
  - Employees may be assigned to other work locations with minimal notice

### **Communicate to Employees about Emergency Plans prior to an Emergency**

- Communicate with employees about the threat of an emergency and describe the steps to take to prepare for it such as:
  - Potential changes to personnel policies
  - Changes in business operations which may include measures such as social distancing, increase in telecommuting, or suspension of non-essential functions
  - The importance of staying home if employees are ill or have disease symptoms
- Distribute practical information on emergency preparedness.
- While communicating during emergency planning, reinforce that we value the contribution of each and every employee and appreciate their commitment to public service.

Refer to **Communication and Consistent Messaging** on page 12 in this manual for more communications planning guidance).

## Employee Designations

In each department's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), management has listed essential functions and employee designations. Employees should be informed of their designations during onboarding and annually during performance evaluation process. The obligations of the employees should be explained by the department in a designation letter or operational bulletin and understood in advance of an emergency event. Payroll and human resources functions are mission-critical in every department.

The following section provides guidance and direction to assist all agencies in designating personnel prior to and during an emergency and in communicating that designation to employees along with the obligations related to their designation. Details about the requirements to report to work, absences, use of leave, and payment during a facility closure is provided in the Human Resources Policy: [County Operations During Emergency Situations and Inclement Weather](#).

Employees designated as first responders or mission-critical may receive lodging, meal reimbursement, and emergency designation badges that give them access to sensitive areas and facilities if the situation requires. Employees may be called upon to work at any point to respond to the emergency situation. Telecommute agreements are required if the essential duties can be adequately performed via telecommuting.

In the agency COOP, decisions have been made as to the designation that will apply for each employee, position, and/or function. The designations outlined below are:

### First Responders

First Responders are employees who, in the early stages of an emergency incident, are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, the environment, and/or the restoration of order.

These employees may have a direct role in emergency response and may also staff essential functions. **These employees have the highest duty to report to work in emergency conditions.** Employees hired into a first responder position are likely aware of their duties in an emergency, however they should have their designation clearly communicated to them and be reminded of their duties to report on an annual basis.

### Mission-critical Employees

Mission-critical employees are those who provide for and maintain the essential functions of county services as described in the Continuity of Operations Plans. Mission-critical employees **must be available to perform their duties** as determined by their agency management. If unable to report to their usual county worksite, the employee must contact their supervisor to report their status, receive an assignment, and/or be directed to an alternate worksite location. The employee may also be assigned by agency management to telecommute and telecommute agreements should be put in place prior to an emergency.

## **Non-mission Critical in an Emergency Employees**

These are employees who staff county functions or services that may be suspended in an emergency while essential functions are prioritized. It should not be presumed that non-mission critical employees won't be asked to report to work during an emergency, only that in the initial impact period, the functions they perform may not be required for emergency response or business continuity of essential functions.

## **Recommended Employee Designation Communication Process**

Clearly communicating each employee's designation is an important step in preparing for emergencies and inclement weather. Agencies must communicate the designation to employees using one or more of the following methods:

- Individual letters provided to employees
- Notification to employees in particular classifications
- Notification to employees performing essential functions

Employees will be provided information about their designation during onboarding, including signing a telecommute agreement if appropriate for their role. Employees should be reminded of their designations and associated expectations annually or if any changes are made to their designation.

Communication about designations should include the following information. Some of this information is included in a designation letter or notice, and some is better delivered by the supervisor directly to employees.

1. The designation associated with the role the employee fills or work the employee performs;
2. The obligation to report to work, telecommute, or use leave if unable to report for work;
3. The method employees should use to report their absence from work and how they will receive information during an emergency;
4. An explanation of what they should do if management closes a facility or a service;
5. If represented by a union, that during an emergency and as necessary to respond to that emergency event, certain provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreement may be temporarily suspended;
6. That employees may be asked to fulfill roles, for emergency response or business continuity, based on their skills and/or classification that are outside their normal role for emergency response or business continuity purposes;
7. Encourage employees to plan and be prepared for emergencies at home.

Templates for letters and notices can be found on the HR Forms and Templates site in the Miscellaneous section: <https://kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/policy-forms/hr-forms.aspx>

## Preparing Employees in a Line of Succession

In each Department's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), management has identified lines of succession. Management lines of succession should be at least four employees deep where practical. Operational and emergency response lines of succession may be at least four employees deep. Where there may be multiple simultaneous emergencies, such as an earthquake and a flood, the lines of succession may require further expansion.

In agency Continuity of Operations Plans and preparation for emergencies:

- The personnel identified for the line of succession should know the operations of the work unit; have the confidence of the principal to act in his or her absence; clearly understand the scope of the powers and duties delegated to him or her; and clearly understand the constraints, if any, of the powers and authorities she or he will be delegated.
- The succession plan should clearly **identify the names of designated personnel**, and their regular titles and how they can be contacted. (Consider having the principal's phone, work cell-phone, and email forwarded to the person who assumes the powers and duties of the principal in his/her absence.)
- The names and **order of succession** of designated personnel shall be communicated to division and work unit personnel.
- Train or provide reference materials for all people named in the management line of succession about how to prepare for and contribute to a Business Continuity Call, a daily (at a minimum) call that is held with leaders from all agencies to discuss the status of operations, communications, and the workforce.
- If all personnel identified for the line of succession are unavailable (which may be the case in small work units where there is a limited number of leadership personnel), the department should provide for **alternate lines of succession** that identify other personnel who can assume the powers and duties outside of the work unit. The line of succession plan should be updated whenever a pertinent staff change occurs.
- Departments should determine if those in the line of succession may need to be **cross-trained** in advance and provide such training where needed. Advance cross-training for essential functions, such as the payroll function, is imperative. The department may provide resources to cross-train employees in other functions (video tapes, outside trainers, procedures manuals, teleconferencing, consultants, etc.).

- Departments should construct a method by which those in the line of succession will have **access to information** and needed items (e.g. computer passwords, calendars for employee approved time off, office keys, file cabinet keys, etc.) should an emergency arise.
- Employees in a line of succession must be notified of their position in that line of succession, the conditions under which that line of succession will be activated, and the change in expectations from the regular designation (first responder, mission-critical, or non-mission critical in an emergency) if the line of succession is activated.

### Planning for Staffing During an Emergency

In an emergency, King County can expect a high absentee rate from lack of mobility, injury, sickness, school and daycare closures, property damage, or other pressing matters employees may need to address before working. Because of this, departments need to create staffing plans for essential functions that account for different staffing levels.

As agencies plan for staffing requirements and prepare to administer pay, approval of leave, alternative work arrangements, and discipline in emergencies and inclement weather, it will be important to consider equity impacts and potential bias in how decisions are made. Each agency is encouraged to develop processes that minimizes disparities in use of alternative work arrangements, leave, pay, and discipline based on protected class status. After events, such as snow and storms, that disrupt operations, agencies should perform an after-action review to identify if some processes were applied inequitably and adjust them to continually improve equitable outcomes.

For each essential function ask:

- Will this function require more or less staff than usual?
  - More staff: who are the people who have the skills needed to do the work?
    - Identify secondary personnel who have the skills and abilities to perform essential functions even if outside their current assignment.
    - Identify other personnel, such as retired employees, former employees, temporary workers, or contract workers, who may be available to perform essential functions.
    - Identify potential volunteers who have the skills to perform needed departmental functions.
  - Fewer staff: work with unions to decide how staff will be selected to report to work if fewer employees are needed for the function during an emergency.
- Will there be new demands on the service e.g. 8:00-4:30 operations turning into 24/7 operations?
  - Calculate staffing needs for higher demand for services.

- Calculate some/appropriate rest and meal times with adequate coverage
- Can this function be performed on an alternative schedule so that employees can be available or so that it doesn't interfere with emergency response?
  - Communicate potential changes to employees.

***Alternative Work Arrangements***

In an emergency, normal and alternative work schedules may need to change rapidly. Every effort will be made to give as much notice as possible.

Depending upon the circumstances and employee assignment, some employees may also telecommute, where mutually agreed to by management and the employee. Telecommuting is possible only in those circumstances where it may be effectively performed. Telecommute agreements should be completed prior to the emergency.

***Special Duty Assignments and Cross-training Employees***

In emergency preparation, departments should identify areas where employees with the appropriate skills can perform essential functions and anticipate the use of special duty assignments. Where the essential function requires a very specific set of skills, departments should cross-train employees to perform these functions and maintain a list of employees with the requisite skills.

***Rescission of Approved Leave***

In order to staff county functions, rescission of approval for executive leave, vacation leave, compensatory time off, and leave without pay is a possible strategy that can be used during a proclaimed emergency. Departments should coordinate the approach internally and involve their human resources staff. Managers and supervisors should keep an updated calendar of all approved time off and provide access to that calendar to employees named in the line of succession.

***Reassigning Staff with Similar Skills from Different Work Units***

Prior to the emergency, departments and divisions should discuss potential use of employees across departments, divisions, and services. Reassignment may be accompanied by pay increases (if work out of class or Special Duty assignment is used).

In a worst-case scenario of an ongoing emergency, King County may elect to focus on a select set of services (essential and otherwise) due to resource constraints. In that case, a reduction in force or furlough of employees not serving essential roles may need to be utilized.

***Contingent Workforce***

King County contingent workers fall into one of four general categories: contract workers, short-term temporary employees, term-limited temporary employees, and intern and work study students. The majority of contingent workers within King County are in the administrative, financial, and information technology fields.

During the **planning phase** for an emergency, departments may find it helpful to identify the classifications of staff needed to accomplish essential functions and whether contingent workers are an

option to provide backfill in staffing essential functions. If so, departments may pre-complete forms in order to have the necessary documentation already completed and ready to use if an emergency is declared.

***Volunteer Services***

During an emergency, departments may wish to utilize the services of volunteers. Volunteers, other than emergency workers, may be utilized for an emergency after departments have attempted to staff functions with employees. Volunteer skills will be assessed prior to utilization.

Registration as an emergency worker is a prerequisite for various legal protections under the State Emergency Worker program, including reimbursement for damaged personal equipment and support in the event of injury.

Other volunteer programs run through the county may be used. However, unless they meet the criteria to be registered as a temporary emergency worker, they will not receive the same protections. Consult with King County Office of Emergency Management if, during emergency planning and preparation, you identify a potential need for volunteers.

## Labor Relations – Planning for Emergency Administration

The Executive may direct the temporary suspension of certain collective bargaining agreement provisions and bargaining obligations, notably those that concern scheduling, notification procedures and assignment of work, should an emergency be declared.

Suspension of certain collective bargaining agreement provisions or bargaining obligations must be carefully analyzed and communicated to employees and labor representatives prior to and during an emergency wherever possible. Communications are accomplished in conjunction with agencies through the Office of Labor Relations.

Although an emergency provides the county authority to temporarily suspend various specific provisions of collective bargaining agreements in order to continue service, this authority is limited to the need to temporarily manage short-term emergent and unforeseen effects due to business necessity.

The framework for collective bargaining is that of a phased approach to include (A) bargaining foreseeable implications before an emergent event; (B) responding to the actual occurrence of an event to address the emergency (utilize county employees as needed notwithstanding contract language, bargaining obligations or personnel guidelines -- typically in the areas of notification periods and work assignments); and (C) bargaining after the emergent event has stabilized.

### **Bargaining Foreseeable Implications During the Pre-Emergency Planning Phase**

When planning for a potential emergency, when a condition may be reasonably expected and prepared for by the county, the county must bargain wages, hours and working conditions associated with the emergency. In such cases, the situation remains within the control of the county and the county would engage in pre-emergency planning discussions and negotiations with labor organizations. **Each department, with the assistance of OLR, should document the agreements made during emergency planning bargaining in the COOP.**

Please refer to Section 2 of these guidelines for information about responding to the actual occurrence of an event to address the emergency (e.g. utilize county employees as needed notwithstanding contract language, bargaining obligations or personnel guidelines -- typically in the areas of notification periods and work assignments); and bargaining after the emergent event has stabilized.

## Preparing Communication and Consistent Messaging

One of the key elements in responding to any emergency is effective and timely communication. King County communications during an emergency should provide timely and accurate information that provides guidance, eases anxiety, and builds and maintains trust with both employees and external stakeholders. Most emergency communications to staff should and will start with a central communication. Departments or divisions should ONLY communicate if they have something to add that is different than what was in the global message. Fewer messages and sources of messaging leads to fewer opportunities for confusion.

King County departments must plan their internal and external communications strategies. With the aid of central service agencies, departments and agencies will be responsible for coordinating with King County's communications/Public Information Officer network to educate employees and ensure that communications personnel are trained for emergency communications. When communicating to employees and/or external stakeholders, agencies must coordinate closely with the Joint Information Center (JIC) within the King County Emergency Operations Center (KCEOC), their department public information officer and the King County Executive's communications director to ensure that department and countywide messages align. All communications should be customized as needed so they are appropriate for various stakeholders and audiences.

Departments not only need to identify key internal and external stakeholders but the methods that will be used to communicate with them. Departments, together with the Office of Labor Relations, need to communicate with labor representatives and represented employees about potential labor impacts during an emergency.

### *Prepare communications staff:*

- Develop procedures to implement the communications plan and to deploy resources during an emergency.
- Determine whether adequate resources are available during all phases of an emergency; an emergency may last for several days or months. Departments must ensure that they will have the **people available to implement** a sustained communications plan.
- Identify and communicate which employees have **authority to communicate** directly with employees, and know how to contact them.
- Communicate which employees have **authority to issue news releases** or communicate with the media.
- Schedule **crisis communication training** for all employees who will have a communications role. The Office of Emergency Management offers periodic training on this and can also refer employees to other qualified resources (both classroom and online). Contact the OEM for more information.
- Familiarize key management with available communications resources.

*Prepare technology:*

- Establish procedures that will ensure **technology** such as networks and servers are readily available, tested, and backed up.
- Ensure access to laptops, cell phones, and other hardware for appropriate personnel.
- Provide risk communications priority over standard business use.

*Develop and regularly review an emergency communications plan:*

- Prepare templates for standard messaging that can be modified and used as needed during an emergency; get templates approved by the King County Executive's Communication Director.
- Identify two or more communications methods that can be used to communicate with stakeholders during different emergency scenarios. Methods may include a web site, a central telephone number with pre-recorded information, a central telephone number staffed by informed communications personnel, e-mails, text messaging, social media, and/or printed materials.

**Internal stakeholders:**

- a. **Employees:** echo Executive communications. Provide operations-specific communication to employees only as needed.
- b. **Department management:** establish process to communicate business continuity issues and temporary changes to policies and procedures within the department.
- c. **County management:** in addition to required routine communications, departments will need to provide the Executive's Office or other agencies with a record of decisions made during an emergency and other information such as employee absence rates.

**External stakeholders:**

- a. **Labor representatives:** departments should work with their labor negotiators and must establish on-going and frequent communications with labor representatives.
  - Develop a list of union business representatives and provide that list to directors managers, and supervisors—or incorporate these contacts into groups in KCInform.
- b. **The public:** departments and agencies will need to communicate business continuity issues and changes to policies and procedures to the general public.

*Prepare employees:*

- Ask employees to update their emergency contact information in PeopleSoft.
- Encourage employees to sign up for alerts on their personal devices through KCInform.

- Educate employees on how they can access information during an emergency – a website, phone hotline, supervisor, etc.
- Encourage employees to prepare themselves and their families for an emergency using resources such as: <https://makeitthrough.org/individuals/>.
- Ask for feedback and plan for accessibility requirements that may be necessary due to an emergency. These requirements may include additional disability access services or translation services.

# Section 2: Workforce Management in an Emergency Quick Reference Guide

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## Labor Relations – Emergency Administration

Management is expected to deploy the workforce as needed to respond to an emergency event to address the emergency (utilize county employees as needed notwithstanding contract language, bargaining obligations or personnel guidelines -- typically in the areas of notification periods and work assignments); and engage in bargaining required after the emergent event has stabilized. Where possible, the department will have bargained any foreseeable impacts of emergency operations on provisions of collective bargaining agreements prior to an emergency. If supervisors or management have questions about bargaining or contract obligations, they are advised to consult with their Labor Relations representative.

The following guidelines provide for the administration of collective bargaining agreements in the event an emergency is proclaimed:

### 1. Guiding Principles

- a. Should an emergency be proclaimed, **emergency administration of collective bargaining agreements** may be invoked at the discretion of the executive where:
  - The King County Executive has proclaimed a temporary emergency;
  - The emergency threatens to impair county operations;
  - The need to address the threat results in an unavoidable suspension of certain collective bargaining agreement provisions or bargaining obligations;
  - Suspension of collective bargaining agreement provisions or bargaining obligations is temporary and narrowly tailored to provide necessary services during an emergency; and
  - Suspension of collective bargaining agreement provisions or bargaining obligations is limited to the duration of the emergency.
- b. The provisions of the respective collective bargaining agreements or bargaining obligations that are temporarily suspended due to the emergency should be those that:
  - Ensure that functions of the unit can be staffed safely;
  - Have the least disruptive effect on bargaining unit employees; and
  - Have the least disruptive effect on non-bargaining unit employees.
- c. Managers and supervisors should follow the provisions of collective bargaining agreements which have not been suspended. In situations where the administration of a collective bargaining agreement during an emergency is causing difficulties, agency management must work with the Office of Labor Relations to resolve the issue. Only the King County Executive may direct suspension of collective bargaining agreements; agency management may not make such a directive.

- d. Managers and supervisors should provide as much notice to employees as possible, given the circumstances, of any change affecting employees.

**2. Communication** to employees that certain provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreement have been suspended is required. Again, after the executive makes the announcement to the department directors, the Office of Labor Relations and the Department of Human Resources, department directors will notify division directors who will have the responsibility to work with the Office of Labor Relations to communicate and implement the directive within the division.

For instance, the emergency may result in high absentee rates resulting in the loss of the necessary number of employees to perform the identified functions of the work unit. The employee absentee rate may reach a point where, in order to perform the functions of the work unit, it is necessary to use employees outside of the bargaining unit to perform the work.

Some other examples are:

- Previously approved vacation, compensatory time, leave of absences (other than for sick or family leave purposes) may be rescinded with minimal notice.
- Employees may be required to report for work with minimal notice.
- Employees' work schedules and/or hours of work may change with minimal notice.
- Employees may be requested to telecommute with minimal notice.
- Employees may be assigned overtime with minimal notice.
- Employees may be assigned special duty with minimal notice.
- Employees may be assigned to other work units with minimal notice.
- Employees may be assigned to other work locations with minimal notice.

### **3. Pay and Break Periods**

- a. Compensation will be paid in accordance with the respective collective bargaining agreements or personnel policies, as appropriate, for all work performed. Compensation errors, if any, may need to be corrected once the emergency has subsided.
- b. Rest and Meal Periods will be administered in accordance with the employees' collective bargaining agreement, Personnel Guidelines and Washington State law. Should exigent circumstances exist where rest and/or meal periods cannot be taken, employees will be paid for any missed rest and/or meal period. Again, compensation errors, if any, may need to be corrected once the emergency has subsided.

#### 4. Contract Negotiations and Administration

During the period of the emergency, the King County Executive may temporarily **suspend collective bargaining** negotiations, grievance processing, and labor-management committee meetings. It is critical that agency management make labor-related decisions in consultation with the Office of Labor Relations.

##### **Required Bargaining after the Emergent Event has Stabilized**

In order to address any unforeseen but necessary actions taken during the actual emergency event, additional bargaining may occur in the aftermath of the emergency. Many matters may also be addressed in labor-management committee meetings.

A current list of collective bargaining agreements is located at:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/laborrelations.aspx>

##### **Essential Functions, Employee Designations, Lines of Succession**

Departments have identified first responder and essential functions in their Continuity of Operations Plans and have designated employees as first responders, mission critical, or non-mission critical in an emergency.

First responders are required to report for work if their function is required to respond to the emergency situation.

Mission critical personnel are required to report to work, work pursuant to an approved alternative work arrangement, or telecommute in order to perform essential functions. If a mission-critical employee is staffing an essential function that is required to be performed periodically or cyclically, the employee may use leave to cover absences during down periods.

Non-mission critical in an emergency personnel may be required to report to work, work pursuant to an alternative work arrangement, telecommute, may request to use accrued leave, or request time off without pay. Sick leave may not be used unless a sick leave event has occurred. Use of leave may be subject to change as an emergency situation unfolds

Management lines of succession may be activated if key personnel become unavailable or incapacitated. In these circumstances, refer to Lines of Succession included in the Continuity of Operations Plan.

##### **Facility Closures/Reduction in Force**

In the rare instance that the Executive or agency head closes a facility, and no alternative worksite is designated (such as telecommuting), employees will be paid as outlined in the [County Operations During Emergency Situations and Inclement Weather](#).

Management will communicate the facility closure or change in service provision as soon as possible to employees using the KCIInform emergency notification system. When facilities are reopened and services resume as usual, employees should be notified again using KCIInform.

The county will analyze the necessity for furloughs or reductions in force depending upon how long facilities are closed.

### Providing Lodging and Meals for First Responder and Mission Critical Employees

Employees who are designated first responders or mission critical and are required to remain near the work site may have lodging and a per diem for meals provided while the emergency or incident response is in effect. Management may determine who will be provided meals and lodging in order to maintain emergency response and business continuity. Employees who are not mission critical are not eligible for county-provided lodging or a per diem, unless there is a specific assignment made to a mission-critical position or set of duties.

### Emergency Closure of Schools and Daycare Facilities

Healthy employees may need to remain at home to care for healthy children or other healthy dependents if schools and daycare facilities are closed. Employees must request to use accrued leave to cover any absences. Sick leave usage is not allowed unless a sick leave event has occurred. All employees with school-aged children are encouraged to pre-plan for potential school closures.

### Alternative Work Arrangements

**Alternative work schedules** are an arrangement whereby employees may modify their regular work day and/or their work week as defined in the [“Alternative Work Arrangements Guide: a Reference for Managers and Employees Considering Alternative Work Schedules and Telecommuting”](#) (October 2008), and in respective collective bargaining agreements.

The **administration of alternative work schedules may be modified** during a proclaimed emergency to enhance social distancing, business continuity or other emergency response goals as follows:

1. In addition to regular full-time employees, **regular part-time and temporary employees** may be asked to work alternative or different schedules than their normal schedules. Alternative work schedule for a part-time employee simply means a change in the scheduled workweek and does not mean that the part-time FTE may be increased. However, the part-time employee may work beyond their normal part-time hours on a very limited exigent basis.
2. Departments shall **review their normal business hours and work schedules** to determine if they can be modified in a manner that best promotes social distancing, business continuity or other emergency response goals.
3. If alternative schedules are required to deliver services and promote emergency response goals, supervisors should first ask for employees who are willing to work hours other than their usual schedule. Where certain work schedules cannot be staffed with those willing to modify their schedules, department management may direct staff to work the schedules necessary.
4. **Management may change regular or alternative work schedules** during emergency situations. As much advance notice should be given to employees as possible. See the section Labor Relations - Emergency Administration if there are concerns about the impact of schedule changes on provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

5. Departments are encouraged to work with staff to minimize the impacts of decisions affecting schedule changes. Rest and meal period requirements continue regardless of work schedule in accordance with Washington State Regulations.

Approved alternative work schedules should also be **formally documented using the [Alternative Work Schedule Agreement](#)**. There may be circumstances during an event when completing an Alternative Work Schedule Agreement or getting the HR, division, and director signature is not possible – under those circumstances, an employee may utilize an Alternative Work Schedule with only the signature of their supervisor or without an agreement but should process one as soon as practical.

If an employee makes a request for an alternative work schedule and the request is denied, no written explanation of why the request has been denied is required during the emergency.

When appropriate, management may assign an employee back to the employee's regular schedule.

- a. If an employee is assigned back to his or her regular schedule during an emergency, the assignment is subject to a 24-hour cancellation notice, when possible; if less than a 24-hour notice is necessary, department management may make such changes as necessary.
- b. If an employee is assigned back to his or her regular schedule after the emergency is declared over, the assignment is subject to notification periods contained in applicable collective bargaining agreements.

### Telecommuting

During an emergency, work schedules may need to change as quickly as the emergency unfolds. Depending upon the circumstances and employee assignment, employees may telecommute, where mutually agreed to by management and the employee. If an employee is able to telecommute and chooses not to, they are required to use accrued leave to cover absences.

Telecommuting is possible only in those circumstances where it may be effectively performed. There may be rare and exceptional circumstances during an event when a telecommute agreement is not on file and completing a telecommuting agreement is not possible – under those circumstances, an employee may telecommute without an agreement but should process one as soon as practicable.

Reference: [Telecommute Policy](#), [Telecommute Agreement](#)

### Contingent Workforce

Management and supervisors can use contract workers, short-term temporary and term-limited temporary as needed to fulfill staffing needs if incumbent employees are unable to fulfill the required first responder and essential functions. Simplified hiring processes may be used during an active emergency. Disability and recall referrals will not be required but may be used to fill staffing needs.

1. **During an emergency:**

- a. **Contract Workers (CW)** - Departments may **go directly to the CW agency** to hire the needed personnel. Departments remain responsible for recording CW hours during the emergency.
- b. **Short-Term Temporary (STT)** - Departments may **immediately hire STTs** to backfill for the needed personnel. The STT requests will be entered into PeopleSoft within three business days of hire.
- c. **Term-Limited Temporary (TLT)** - Departments may immediately hire TLTs to backfill in classifications that are identified as performing first responder or essential functions in the COOP. The TLT requests will be entered into PeopleSoft within three business days of hire.
  - (1) During the period of a declared emergency, or until otherwise instructed, **Career Support Services processes will be suspended for TLTs**. However, when practical, departments should attempt to work with Career Support Services and hire former King County employees who have been laid off for the TLT position.
  - (2) **No Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ)** will be required during the period of a proclaimed emergency for TLTs. A PDQ will be required for any TLT that continues after the emergency is declared at an end. A PDQ for such a must be processed within ten calendar days of the declared end to the emergency.
- d. During an emergency, **New Employee Orientation** will not be required for STTs. TLTs shall attend New Employee Orientation as soon as practical after the emergency is declared over (within seven calendar days after the emergency is declared over would be ideal). In both cases, departments should contact BPROS to obtain alternative delivery methods of the required new employee information (video, handouts, etc.).

### Special Duty Assignments

Email may be used as the approval process for assigning special duty, which is faster than the current process. There may be rare and exceptional circumstances during an event when completing a special duty approval is not possible – under those circumstances, an employee may perform special duty when assigned to do so and the supervisor should process the approval as soon as practicable. Employees will receive the usual special duty pay for the majority of duties performed in a higher classification and their usual base pay for duties performed in a lower classification.

### Volunteer Services

If volunteer services are needed, refer to any pre-emergency planning documents related to volunteer services and contact the King County Office of Emergency Management for instructions and guidance on utilizing volunteers.

### Rescission of Approved Leave

In order to staff county functions, rescission of approval for executive leave, vacation leave, compensatory time off and leave without pay is a possible strategy and can be ordered by the Executive during a proclaimed emergency. Departments should coordinate the approach internally and involve their human resources staff.

## Sending Ill Employees Home

During a biological emergency, such as a pandemic flu, employees who show symptoms of being ill in the workplace may be asked to leave the workplace and may use sick leave to cover the absence or any other appropriate leave in accordance with the county's current policies.

## Return to Work Authorization

During a biological emergency, such as a pandemic flu, medical certifications will not be required but, if an employee who returns to work is symptomatic, the employee may be asked to leave the workplace until the person no longer exhibits symptoms.

## Family Medical Leave and Sick Leave

These will continue to be administered as usual. Employees may be asked to reschedule medical appointments until after the first phase of the emergency response unless the appointment qualifies as protected family medical leave under a federal, state, or county legal requirement.

## Leave Donation

This will continue to be administered as usual.

## Discipline – Conduct Including Unauthorized Absences

The processing of proposed discipline may need to be held in abeyance if management's time is monopolized due to responding to the emergency. Acute circumstances may be addressed by on-site supervisors who will make efforts to contact their department human resources staff.

Forms and templates can be found in the Investigation and Discipline section of the HR Forms and Templates website: <https://kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/policy-forms/hr-forms.aspx>

## Communication and Consistent Messaging

Departments should provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to employees in coordination with the executive's communication manager. Refer to the Department's Continuity of Operations Plan for additional information about communication during an emergency.

## Employee Assistance Program and Making Life Easier

Supervisors should have current information on these services and will be encouraged to refer employees to these services as needed or on request. Supervisors requiring information may find information [here](#). If there are additional questions, supervisors are advised to consult with their human resources staff.

## What to do in the Event of Injury or Fatality

### A. Safety and Claims – Employee Event

King County government is committed to maintaining safety and health in our daily work as well as during an emergency. Should an event occur resulting in an on-the-job injury or fatality to any of our workforce members, the following actions should be taken to protect those remaining at the scene, to assist the deceased employee's family members, to investigate the incident, and to take measures in order to prevent future such events.

1. For events involving serious injuries or fatalities call 911 immediately.
2. Any on-the-job event that results in a fatality, probable fatality, or results in the hospital admission of an employee, must be reported, usually by the employee's supervisor, to the Safety and Claims Management office immediately, regardless of time or day.

For events which occur when the Safety and Claims Management office is closed, the supervisor calls the Facilities Management Division (FMD) Security, which is open 24 hours a day. FMD will act as the contact. FMD will notify Safety and Claims Management personnel of any reported events.

**Call 206-296-0510 M – F Office Hours 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

**Call 206-296-5000 FMD Security – Weekends/After Hours**

In addition, any on-the-job event involving an employee fatality or hospital admission must be reported to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries within eight hours of the event. Safety and Claims Management personnel will make this report. When a supervisor is unable to reach Safety and Claims Management personnel within that time period, he or she should make the report directly to Labor and Industries and the toll-free central reporting telephone number is: 1-800-321-6742.

Labor and Industries will need the following information:

- a. Location of event
  - b. Employee's name
  - c. Employer - King County
  - d. Apparent cause of death or injury
  - e. Details leading up to the event
3. When notified of an event via the Safety and Claims phone number, the Security number or the Labor and Industries number, the appropriate Safety and Claims Management Safety and Health representative will respond to the scene of the event.
    - a. When the Safety and Health representative arrives, he or she will assist the supervisor in conducting the investigation.
    - b. Equipment or materials must not be moved until released by the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries or the county's Safety and Claims Management representative, except if victims need to be extricated or to prevent further accident or injury.
    - c. In the case of vehicle accidents, law enforcement agencies responsible for investigating shall be called as soon as practicable. Investigating police officers shall be in charge of the accident scene.

Once the event has been resolved, the supervisor will review the contents of the workers' compensation packet with the injured employee(s).

B. Fatality Procedures -

In the event of a fatality, it is highly recommended that the department identify a liaison to coordinate all contact with the family. Contact information of the liaison should be communicated to the Safety & Claims Office along with the claim documentation. For example, the Sheriff's Office designates a single employee as the liaison to the family and then all county entities work through the family liaison when communicating with the family.

4. If there is a surviving spouse and/or other dependent(s), the Claims Officer should coordinate with the employee liaison to schedule a convenient time for the family to review the details of survivor benefits and complete the "Claim for Pension by the Spouse or Children" with the family. The claim must be completed and accompanied by the following documents:
  - a. A copy of the marriage certificate
  - b. Birth certificates for the dependent children
  - c. A copy of the death certificate
  - d. A copy of the divorce decree showing custody of any minor children if applicable
5. When a beneficiary's claim is approved, a one-time "immediate" payment is made. The maximum benefit payable is 200% of Washington State's average monthly wage in effect at the time of injury.
6. EAP follow up counseling and/or Critical Incident Stress Debriefing for co-workers is available through the King County Employee Assistance Program (EAP): 1-888-874-7290.
  - a. The manager of the deceased, seriously ill, or injured employee should generally contact EAP directly upon learning of the employee's condition and be prepared to provide:
    - i. employee's name
    - ii. department, section and workgroup
    - iii. name of immediate supervisor
    - iv. date of death or injury
    - v. cause/circumstances of death, serious illness, or injury
    - vi. length of time the employee has been at King County
    - vii. known facts about employee's relationship to his or her workgroup
    - viii. if employee's co-workers have been informed and if so, how they are responding
  - b. Depending on the answers to the information above, EAP will coordinate with the HR Manager, employee manager and/or group supervisor to decide whether to hold one or more group and/or individual EAP debriefings at one or more King County sites. Time, frequency, and/or duration of the meetings will depend on the particular circumstances surrounding the employee's death, serious illness, or injury. Upon meeting with affected co-workers or work groups, EAP will assess the need for further interventions or assistance and provide direct feedback to appropriate management.

## **B. Benefits, Payroll and Retirement Operations – Resources for Survivor Benefits**

If the death of an employee occurs, King County has compiled the following list of resources for the employee's surviving family members and beneficiaries to help this navigate this

challenging time. The primary point of contact will be BPROS staff who can assist with the different steps and considerations of the administrative processes involved.

### Contact Information

In the event of the death of an employee, spouse, domestic partner, or dependent who is covered by King County benefits, the survivor may contact Benefits, Payroll and Retirement Operations (BPROS) at:

- Mail: BPROS, The Chinook Building CNK-ES-0240, 401 5th Ave, Seattle, WA 98104
- Phone: BPROS 206-684-1556
- Email [kc.benefits@kingcounty.gov](mailto:kc.benefits@kingcounty.gov)
- Fax to 206-296-7700

The survivor should provide BPROS with the decedent's name, date of death, Social Security Number, address, and who to contact for more information.

1. **Payroll:** If applicable, the survivor will receive a letter from BPROS explaining what is required to process an employee's final paycheck.
2. **Medical/Dental/Vision Insurance:** Should the employee death result in a need for the family to continue medical/dental/vision insurance or the injury means the employee will not return to work through COBRA, benefits can be extended up to 18 months.

Contact Benefits, Payroll and Retirement Operations at 206-684-1556 regarding any questions about COBRA Continuation Coverage or COBRA Open Enrollment.

- To contact Navia Benefits Solutions with COBRA/retiree questions, call 425-452-3490<sup>Ⓢ</sup> or 877-920-9675<sup>Ⓢ</sup>, or email: [cobra@naviabenefits.com](mailto:cobra@naviabenefits.com)

3. **State Pension Survivor Benefits:** To initiate a claim for benefits from your pension account, contact the account manager:
  - Washington State Department of Retirement Systems  
Telephone: 1 (800) 547-6657
4. **Flexible Spending Accounts:** For information on accessing an established health care or dependent care flexible spending account go to:

[www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/benefits/your-benefits/flexible-spending-accounts.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/benefits/your-benefits/flexible-spending-accounts.aspx)

5. **Union Survivor Benefits:** To determine if a death benefit is provided through your union, contact the union directly.

6. **Life Insurance:** In order to process a life insurance claim, BPROS will need a certified copy of the decedent's death certificate.

Life insurance benefits are based on selections made by the employee either when the employee became eligible or when there is a life insurance enrollment as a result of a qualifying life event. A review of the employee's benefits coverage will determine exact disbursements. A BPROS representative will contact the survivor to explain the benefits and the claims process.

King County life insurance options are:

- Basic life insurance equivalent to one times an employee's annual salary (\$25,000 is a part-time transit operator), or Supplemental life insurance for the employee up to four times the employee's annual salary (\$25,000 -- \$100,000 in \$25,000 increments).
- Employees may purchase supplemental life insurance for spouse or domestic partner at 50% of the employee's supplemental coverage.
- Supplemental life insurance for dependent children ages 6 – 25. All children are covered for \$10,000 each.
- Employees may also be entitled to accelerated benefits. In the case of the employee or covered spouse or domestic partner's terminal illness, certain benefits may be paid before death. Employees may receive up to 75% of the life insurance benefit to a maximum of \$100,000 for a spouse/partner or \$450,000 for the employee.
- Upon death, a portion of insurance benefits may be assigned to a funeral home to pay for funeral expenses. In order to assign a portion of the benefit BPROS will need the name, address, and contact person for the funeral home.