



Authorized Closings

No. 5600

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Affected Parties:
Undergraduate
Graduate
Faculty
Staff
Other

Companion Policies:
Policy on
Compensation During
Authorized Closings,

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1.0 Purpose

This policy defines the process followed when the university is affected by inclement weather, natural disasters, emergencies and other conditions that may cause operations to be suspended or curtailed. It addresses decision-making authority and assigns responsibility for communications.

This policy is formulated under the authority delegated to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) and will be applied independent of decisions by other state agencies.

The provisions of this policy apply to all university employees and students.

2.0 Policy

It is the policy of Virginia Tech to operate in accordance with its approved university calendar and to maintain full operations unless specifically closed by the Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer. All authorized closings resulting from inclement weather, natural disasters, or emergency conditions will be announced through the communication plan described in this policy.

University employees should consult university policy 4305 for specific expectations in the event of a closure and information about supervisor/employee responsibilities, leave usage, and compensation.

2.1 Determination of Authorized Closings

When the university is affected by inclement weather, a natural disaster, operational challenge(s), or other emergency, classes may be cancelled or operations of the university officially suspended. Such authorized closings may be for an entire or partial day/shift. Decisions to close will be made as follows:

1. The Blacksburg Campus and Facilities in the Immediate Blacksburg Area (Excluding Off-Campus Extension)

The decision to close all university operations on the Blacksburg campus and facilities in the immediate Blacksburg area will be made by the Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer or, in his/her absence, the Associate Vice President for Safety and Security or, in the absence of both previously mentioned roles, the Executive Vice President and Provost.

A detailed procedure will be maintained by the office of the Associate Vice President for Safety and Security and will be reviewed annually with the appropriate university personnel. If current and projected weather conditions indicate the potential exists for a delayed opening, cancellation of classes, or closing of the university, the Virginia Tech Police Shift Commander will contact the Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer and initiate the internal procedure.



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If the university is closed, classes are cancelled and administrative offices are closed.

It is not typically the university's practice to make a centralized decision about the cancellation of specific events in instances where the university closes due to inclement weather. Each event sponsor has the responsibility for cancelling or rescheduling the event and communicating any changes to University Relations for inclusion as appropriate on the university website(s), as well as communicating any changes via other notification methods available to the sponsor. Sponsors should monitor the weather and road conditions and consider the safety of employees and program participants in determining whether or not to cancel a given event.

Some facilities (dining and wellness facilities, etc.) remain open or provide limited service hours during a university closure to support on-campus students. The department head for a university scheduling office that is typically open may close a facility they manage if the weather and road conditions merit or appropriate staffing cannot be provided due to inclement weather, thereby cancelling all events in that facility. The individual who makes the determination to close a given facility is responsible for communicating the decision to University Relations.

After normal work hours or during the effective time of a closing, the on-duty shift commander in the Virginia Tech Police Department should be contacted to discuss relevant safety risks.

With the exception of emergency personnel who are supporting the event, attendance at any event that occurs during a university closing shall **not** be mandatory. Individual participants should use discretion in determining whether to attend.

For closures due to other factors, and in certain instances of inclement weather, the President, the Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer, and/or the Associate Vice President for Safety and Security may elect to cancel all or specific event(s) and will communicate such decision to the appropriate university sponsor(s) and to University Relations.

2. Virginia Tech Carilion Health Sciences & Technology Facilities (Roanoke)

The decision to close any university operations on the Virginia Tech Carilion Health Sciences and Technology campus in Roanoke will be made by the Vice President for Health Science and Technology or, his/her designee.

3. Extension Facilities (Off-Campus)

Decisions to close off-campus extension facilities will be made by the district and unit directors for their respective areas.

4. Other Research, Continuing Education, and Off-Campus Facilities (Outside Blacksburg and Roanoke)

The facility director, and/or designee, will make decisions to close operations at any satellite research and continuing education facilities which are not located on the main campus in Blacksburg or at the Health Sciences and Technology campus in Roanoke.

The Secretary of the Board of Visitors will be consulted before any action is taken that would impact a meeting of the Board.

2.1.1 Office or Department Closings for Safety or Health Risk

If a department head believes that an office or department should be closed because of safety or health risks, Environmental Health and Safety should be contacted for a recommendation. A recommendation to close an office should be forwarded to the appropriate dean or vice president for approval. After normal work hours, supervisors



should inform the on-duty shift commander in the Virginia Tech Police Department of safety/health risks that may necessitate the closing of an office or department. The Police Department will initiate the appropriate internal standard operating procedures to evaluate the situation.

2.1.2 Weekend and Holiday Operations and Events

It is not the university's practice to make a centralized decision about cancellation of operations or events *on weekends or holidays when there are no classes* and administrative offices are closed.

If inclement weather occurs on weekends or holidays, each event sponsor has the responsibility for cancelling or rescheduling the event and communicating the change. Sponsors should monitor the weather and road conditions, consider the safety of employees and program participants. The department head for a university scheduling office may close a facility they manage if the weather and road conditions merit or appropriate staffing cannot be provided due to inclement weather, thereby cancelling all events in that facility. In consultation with senior management, department heads or directors have the authority to close departmental operations that have been scheduled for a weekend or holiday.

After normal work hours, the on-duty shift commander in the Virginia Tech Police Department should be contacted to discuss relevant safety risks.

2.2 Communication of the Decision to Close

The individual who makes the determination to close a given campus or facility is responsible for communicating the decision to University Relations. University Relations will use the communications channels defined in section 3.1 to notify the university community.

2.3 Policy Exception

An exception to this policy may be granted by the university President, the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer, the Associate Vice President for Safety and Security, or their designee, if the conditions justify it.

3.0 Procedures

3.1 Official Blacksburg Communications Channels

If it becomes necessary to close the Blacksburg campus because of inclement weather or an emergency, University Relations will use several communications channels to announce the decision:

- The Virginia Tech Homepage (www.vt.edu)**
- Campus-wide e-mail from Virginia Tech News to all vt.edu accounts**
- Electronic message boards in classrooms**
- The weather/emergency hotline (540-231-6668)**
- VT Phone Alerts**
- VT Desktop Alerts**

In addition, information will be sent to public media outlets as a public service; however, Virginia Tech is not responsible for misinformation reported on public media outlets.



3.1.2 Supervisor and Employee Responsibilities

Department heads should develop a communications plan for employees to follow in the event of emergency situations. In doing so, managers should anticipate the needs of essential operations, especially those of employees with alternate work schedules (i.e., shift work and weekends); organize a text/telephone tree; and share detailed instructions to ensure adequate coverage and clear communications. Supervisors and employees should consult university policy 4305 for further clarifying information about roles and responsibilities in various instances of authorized closings.

3.2 Re-opening the university

The official announcement to re-open the university will occur via the communications channels defined in section 3.1.1. In the event of multi-day closures, the announcement will designate that the university will be open on a specific day. If no specific time is announced, normal operations will recommence at 12:01 a.m. on the date following the closure.

3.3 Roanoke, Greater Washington, D.C., Metro Area and Other Off-Campus Facilities

3.3.1 Extension Facilities

District and unit directors are responsible for informing employees in their respective facilities of closing in accordance with their emergency communication plans.

3.3.2 Satellite Campuses - Research, Continuing Education, and Other Facilities

Directors of satellite campuses and outlying Agricultural Experiment Stations, and/or designees, are responsible for communicating closing decisions to employees of their respective facilities according to their emergency communication plans.

3.3.3 Off-Campus Classes

Classes held at a satellite location will be cancelled if the satellite campus is closed. Off-campus classes taught at any non-university facility around the state may be cancelled due to emergency conditions at the instructor's discretion. It is recommended that each instructor send a cancellation notice via email and have a *text/telephone-tree* established with their students in order to timely disseminate cancellation information.

3.4 Emergency Notification

VT Alert messages that merit specific definition and inclusion in university policy are those that instruct the campus to either *shelter in place* or *secure in place*. A *shelter in place* instruction will be issued to direct the campus to move indoors. A tornado warning is an example of when the campus will be directed to shelter in place. A *secure in place* notification will be issued when there is a threat of violence to the campus. Individuals are directed to stay/move indoors and seek a secure location. If safe to do so, allow others to seek refuge with you.

3.4.1 Class Schedule During a *Shelter In Place* or *Secure in Place* Alert

Class changes will **not** occur during a *shelter in place* or *secure in place* alert. All individuals are advised to remain where they are sheltering/securing until:

- the alert is lifted,



- otherwise directed by emergency management personnel; or,
- there is a clear threat of imminent danger posed by remaining in that location.

3.4.2 Blacksburg Transit Operation During *Shelter In Place* or *Secure in Place* Alert

The Blacksburg Transit (BT) will **not** operate on campus during a *secure in place* or during a *shelter in place* alert, including tornado warnings. BT operators may instruct passengers to evacuate the buses and enter an appropriate campus building. Individuals who were waiting outdoors to access BT services should return to an appropriate campus building as soon as they are aware of the alert.

4.0 Definitions

Event Sponsor: an officially listed student organization, a university department, or a university-affiliated organization who accepts responsibility for complying with the requirements of university policy 5000, *University Facilities Usage and Event Approval*.

Responsible University Authorities: University officials assigned authority by the President to authorize emergency notifications to provide alert, warning and safety or protection instructions. A listing of these positions is contained in the Emergency Notification System Protocols.

Secure in Place: Stay or move indoors and seek a secure location; if it is safe to do so, allow others to seek refuge with you.

Shelter in Place: Make a shelter of the building that you are in, due to potentially dangerous conditions in the surrounding area.

5.0 References

Emergency Notification System Protocols

Procedure for Delayed Opening, Early Closing or All-Day Closing Due to Weather Conditions (maintained by the Vice President for Operations)

6.0 Approval and Revisions

- Revision 11
 - Updates to position titles and/or responsibilities due to university reorganization.
 - New Section 2.2, #5 added, designating individuals in certain administrative positions as “essential personnel” for large scale emergencies.

Approved March 28, 2008 by the University President, Charles W. Steger.

- Revision 12
Technical corrections, including: changing leave type reported from Inclement Weather (IW) to Authorized Closing (AC); referencing the university Policy 4300 Hours of Work in sections 2.3 and 2.4; adding Martin Luther King, Jr., Day as an observed holiday in section 2.6.5; changing the name of Policy 4325, Alternate Work Site and Telework Policy; and updating the methods for communicating authorized closing information in section 3.1.

Approved January 17, 2010 by University President, Charles W. Steger



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- **Revision 13**
Added Section 3.4 regarding Emergency Notifications; removed separate responsibility for cancellation of classes and added provision that if the university is closed, classes are cancelled; added reference to the detailed procedure regarding these closures that is to be maintained by the Vice President for Administrative Services; added section 2.1.2 regarding cancellation of weekend operations; technical corrections, including removing WVTF radio station and the university switchboard from list of official communications channels, updating external web-links, and slight reorganization of some sections for clarity.
Approved November 11, 2011 by University President, Charles W. Steger.
- **Revision 14**
Language modified in Section 3.4.1 pertaining to actions during a *Shelter in Place* or *Secure in Place* alert.
Approved October 3, 2012 by University President, Charles W. Steger.
- **Revision 15**
Combined and re-organized several sub-sections under “2.3 Compensation” into table format for ease of reference. Updated titles, technical and grammatical corrections.
Approved September 4, 2015 by University President, Timothy D. Sands.
- **Revision 16**
Reworded information in the table for clarification.
Approved January 20, 2017 by University President, Timothy D. Sands.
- **Revision 17**
Technical updates to titles.
Approved February 2, 2018 by University President, Timothy D. Sands.
- **Revision 18**
Separated the operational information into new policy, leaving the human resources related information and procedures in university policy 4305, Policy on Compensation during Authorized Closings.
Approved February 19, 2018 by University President, Timothy D. Sands.
- **Revision 19**
Added language clarifying that university scheduling offices have authority to close facilities they manage, thereby cancelling events in those facilities. Clarified that attendance at events that occur during a university closing is not mandatory.
Approved August 30, 2019 by the University Safety and Security Policy Committee.
Approved August 30, 2019 by University President, Timothy D. Sands.
- **Revision 20**
Updates to policy owner, titles, and decision making authorities/responsible parties, due to organizational realignments.
Approved November 1, 2019 by the University Safety and Security Policy Committee
Approved November 1, 2019 by University President, Timothy D. Sands.