

## **Possible 2011 Furlough FAQs**

### **Will I get paid on March 4<sup>th</sup>? (Updated)**

If a shutdown were to occur at the end of this week, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission would continue to operate for approximately one additional week. Employees would report to work as normal during that period. This means that employees would most likely receive a full paycheck on March 18 for Pay Period 6 ending March 12.

### **Can I come to work voluntarily?**

No. Working voluntarily when you have been furloughed is, in fact, illegal. Unless you are part of the group identified as "excepted employees" (you will be told if you are), or are specifically contacted to help respond to an emergency, you may not come to work or conduct work remotely via telework. If you do get called in for an emergency or have been designated as an excepted employee, you will get paid, although it may be delayed.

### **What if my supervisor encourages me to work voluntarily?**

Remind your supervisor that only emergency or excepted workers are allowed to work.

### **Can I take any leave while on furlough (in order to get paid)?**

No.

### **Can I seek other employment while on furlough?**

Yes, subject to existing ethics rules which remain in place. Unless it requires approval by the EDO, you can do any paid work that you might ordinarily do on the weekends.

### **What if I have planned travel or training during the furlough period?**

Official training and travel to support normal work-related activities would be suspended during the furlough.

### **Will we get our pay back retroactively after the furlough?**

We do not know. In similar circumstances in the past, Congress has retroactively paid furloughed employees. The Congress is under no obligation to do so, and whether it would do so this year is not known.

### **What guidelines determine NRC shutdown procedures?**

The agency is using the current draft of the interim 4.5 Management Directive, which can be found here:

<http://portal.nrc.gov/edo/staff/Lists/Announcements/DispForm.aspx?ID=17&Source=http%3A%2F%2Fportal%2Enrc%2Egov%2Fedo%2Fstaff%2Fdefault%2Easpx>

*New FAQ's Added Monday, February 28th:*

**What happens to the Metro subsidy?**

There will be no changes to the metro subsidy amounts for the month of March. Should the government experience a shutdown, employees will be required to reduce their April metro subsidy by the number of days furloughed.

**Will people get a rebate on parking for the days the government is closed?**

As NRC pays for a specified number of parking spaces one month in advance for each facility, there will be no rebate for parking if the government were to close.

**If people would normally telework on the "orderly closure" day, would we ask them to come in, if possible, to process their furlough paperwork?**

Yes, as many employees as possible will need to physically report to work to receive furlough notices. If that situation occurs, we will let you know ahead of time.

**Will EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) complaints be processed in a timely manner?**

The EEOC's plan is to suspend all timeframes should a government shutdown occur. They will excuse any untimely appeals and actions related to a government shutdown. This is the same position that the EEOC took during the last government shutdown in the 90's.

**Do I have to enter my time and labor this Friday to get my partial paycheck on March 18th?**

In general, it's a good idea to keep your HRMS information updated on a daily basis. If time and labor processing is necessary before the end of this pay period, you will be notified.

**I visited the OPM site that discusses furlough-related issues (<http://www.opm.gov/furlough/furlough.asp>), but I have additional questions about my benefits? Where should I go?**

HR will be hosting information tables in common areas at headquarters, where you will be able to ask questions of an HR representative. Employees in the Regions and other locations should consult with their respective HR staff.

*New FAQ's Added Wednesday, March 2nd:*

**Will employees in the Regions still be able to travel to the RIC?**

Regional employees who had planned on attending the RIC should continue those plans. Consult your supervisor for more details.

### **What impact would a furlough have on my FEHB (Health Benefits) coverage?**

Your coverage will continue for up to 365 days of non-pay status; but even during a non-pay period, you are still responsible for your share of the cost. Employees have the option to pay the premiums directly to the payroll provider or you can have it withheld from your pay when you return to regular duty. Consult your HR representative for more details on these options. Employees also have the option to cancel the FEHB coverage to avoid payments of premiums while in a non-pay status. Employees who do cancel FEHB coverage to avoid payment of premiums during a non-pay status do not have to wait for an open season to re-enroll. Cancellation of FEHB coverage will not affect an employee's right to carry such coverage into retirement. An election form will be provided to employees in the furlough packages. Employees have 31 days from the date of furlough to return the form to the HR office.

### **If there is a partial pay, one week of the pay period and then a furlough starting the second week, what deductions can I expect from my pay?**

There is an order of precedence when gross pay is not sufficient to permit all deductions. Here is a short list of the top 8, which will apply to most employees:

1. Retirement – Deductions for Civil Service Retirement System/Federal Employees Retirement System (CSRS/FERS)
2. Social Security (OASDI) Tax
3. Medicare Tax
4. Federal Income Tax
5. Basic Health Insurance Premium
6. Basic Life Insurance Premium (including Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance)
7. State Income Tax
8. Local Income Tax

### **What would happen to my Federal Employee Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) coverage during a furlough?**

During a non-pay period, coverage would continue for up to 12 months without cost to the employee. Consult your HR rep if you have special circumstances.

### **What happens to my TSP during a furlough?**

While you are in a non-pay status you will not be able to contribute to the TSP and you are not eligible to request a new TSP loan.

### **What happens to my TSP loan during a furlough?**

If you are in an approved non-pay status (e.g. furlough, LWOP), you may suspend your loan payments for up to one year. There will be appropriate paperwork for this in the furlough packages.

### **Will all HR specialists still work during the shutdown so that they can process and forward TSP-41 to the Thrift Savings Board for their notification? How about other forms processing once we have been notified of a shutdown?**

There will be HR Assistants on-site during the shutdown for processing of necessary actions.

**Please provide clarification regarding staff on rotations. Will the home office or hosting office include them in their list of furlough or excepted employees to avoid duplication?**

Employees who are on rotation will be included in their home office organizational listings.

**What happens to the employees in the Graduate Fellowship Program?**

In the event of a shutdown they will not receive pay, but should continue with their school.

**What happens to individuals working on an Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignment?**

In the event of a shutdown, all individuals working on an IPA funded by the government should be notified to stop work.

**If staff are not retroactively paid after the shutdown, does that also mean that staff won't earn leave?**

Employees who work for a partial pay period will earn their leave for that pay period. You will earn leave in a non-pay status, but only for the first two weeks (80 hours).

**Can we provide information to employee creditors to assist in dealing with financial hardship?**

Yes, HR is looking into providing a letter that employees may provide to their creditors confirming that they have been furloughed and requesting that creditors allow employees to make arrangements to pay on an alternative schedule. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can refer employees to sources of legal and financial assistance.

**Will we have access to NRC email via Blackberries or Citrix?**

These systems will not be shutdown. However, furloughed employees are not allowed to perform NRC work during a shutdown.

**What will we do about funding contracts?**

Offices have been working to determine which contracts must be continued and which should be discontinued. However, work will continue on most contracts until funds on that contract are exhausted. The Division of Contracts is communicating directly to contractors regarding their activities during a government shutdown. A limited number of Contracting Officers in the Division of Contracts will be available to provide oversight for mission essential contracts that must continue.

**What happens to the processing of FOIA requests? Would there be an exemption for due dates?**

Yes, we would "stop the clock" on all FOIAs during a shutdown. The offices/regions would not be considered late for any days added to their response times because of a shutdown. Most likely, we would receive guidance from the Department of Justice regarding how to reflect the impact in our end of year FOIA report, but lacking that, we would probably on our own footnote any significant impact in NRC response times to requesters.