

Special Instructions for Agencies Affected by a Possible Lapse in Appropriations Starting on March 23, 2024

In the event an agency and its employees are affected by a lapse in appropriations commencing on Saturday, March 23, 2024, the following special instructions apply. This information supplements (and should be read with) general guidance, issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), on administering an agency shutdown of operations due to a lapse in appropriations. It highlights certain matters of particular relevance to the specific scenario at hand.

For the purpose of these instructions, lapse-affected employees include “furloughed employees” and “excepted employees.” “Excepted employees” may perform activities legally permitted as an exception to the general bar on performing work during a lapse in appropriations but may not be paid for that work until after the lapse is over. (Note: Employees designated as “exempt” from furlough—which is distinct from “excepted employees”—are not affected by a lapse in appropriations because their functions are not funded by annual appropriated funds. “Exempt” employees will generally continue to be governed by the normal pay and leave rules during a lapse in appropriations and are not covered by these special instructions.)

The guidance in these special instructions should be used in concert with OPM’s Guidance for Shutdown Furloughs (including any addendums) and other guidance on OPM’s [shutdown furlough webpage](#).

Payroll Implications

- In the event of a lapse commencing on Saturday, March 23, the Federal civilian paychecks for the February 25 – March 9 pay period would not be delayed, as Federal payroll providers will have already completed processing for this pay period. Paychecks for this pay period should be issued at the normal time (generally, in the March 15 – March 21 time range).
- To minimize potential delays if a lapse lingers, agencies should coordinate with Chief Human Capital Offices and payroll providers to submit employee timekeeping data for the March 10 – March 23 pay period as part of orderly shutdown activities. An employee with a regular Monday-Friday work schedule will generally receive a normal paycheck for that pay period. However, assuming the lapse is in effect during the time that timekeeping is being finalized,

paychecks may not include pay for any work performed on Saturday, March 23. Agencies should document work performed during the March 10 – March 22 period, as well as any other later excepted work performed during the lapse, following any special instructions from their time and attendance and payroll provider. Agencies should also follow any special timekeeping instructions from their time and attendance and payroll provider if the lapse ends before paychecks are issued for the March 10 – March 23 pay period.

- Lapse-affected employees may not receive any pay for periods of time during which the lapse is in effect (beginning on March 23, 2024), including periods when excepted work is performed. The appropriate retroactive pay for periods of furlough and excepted work will be provided after the lapse ends, as required by law.
- If the lapse in appropriations continues during the March 24 – April 6 biweekly pay period, any excepted work performed during the lapse should be documented following any special instructions from the agency's time and attendance and payroll provider. No pay may be provided for excepted work during the March 24 – April 6 pay period until the lapse in appropriations has ended. Under 31 U.S.C. 1341(c), after the lapse in appropriations has ended, both excepted and furloughed employees will receive retroactive pay at the employee's standard rate of pay.

Leave

- During a lapse in appropriations, agencies must cancel all previously scheduled paid leave and other paid time off (including paid holiday time off) for lapse-affected employees.
- Intermittent absences are permitted for excepted employees, subject to supervisory approval. An agency may allow an excepted employee to be absent from duty on days the employee was previously scheduled to take leave or be in holiday time off status. An agency may also use other work schedule flexibilities (e.g., telework or flexible starting/stopping times under a flexible work schedule) to accommodate an employee's personal needs without requiring an absence from duty.
- If an excepted employee is excused from duty during the lapse, the employee must either (1) be placed in furlough status, or (2) placed in paid leave status under 31 U.S.C. 1341(c)(3), if requested by the employee. Generally, we anticipate

that excepted employees will use available workplace flexibilities described above or be furloughed when excused from duty. We do not anticipate that excepted employees will request to use paid leave, since they are entitled to retroactive pay for furlough periods without charge to leave. (See more information in the “Excepted Employees” section below.)

Holidays

- Lapse-affected employees—whether excepted or furloughed—will not be paid for a holiday until after the lapse in appropriations has ended.
- Holiday premium pay rules apply to excepted work performed on a holiday during a lapse in appropriations. Thus, if the lapse is in effect on a holiday, an excepted employee who is required to perform work on the holiday during the employee’s regular hours may earn holiday premium pay; however, payment cannot be made until after the lapse has ended (31 U.S.C. 1341(c)(2)). Excepted employees who are not otherwise scheduled to work on a holiday are not required to work. If an excepted employee does not perform work on a holiday, the employee must be placed in a furlough status for the holiday. See the section on “Excepted Employees” below for additional information.

Orderly Shutdown

- Agencies should provide clear instructions to employees who will be furloughed regarding when they are expected to report to work to perform any necessary orderly shutdown activities.
- With respect to the issuance of furlough notices, agencies should follow OPM’s general guidance in the Guidance to Shutdown Furloughs and any addendums to this guidance posted on OPM’s [shutdown furlough webpage](#), including the sample furlough notices for excepted employees who are furloughed on a holiday or for other intermittent absences.
- As a general rule, agencies may allow an employee whose work is not otherwise excepted to perform up to 4 hours of orderly shutdown activities, as necessary, which may include the time required to receive a furlough notice (in person, electronically, or otherwise, as determined by an agency). Unless the agency directs otherwise, employees are expected to perform any necessary orderly shutdown activities (including receipt of a furlough notice) on the first workday the employee was scheduled to work after the lapse commences. Employees generally should not be allowed to perform orderly shutdown work (up to 4

hours) on a day off (e.g., a weekend day for employees with a Monday-Friday schedule, an Alternative Work Schedule (AWS) day off, or a holiday). For example, since Saturday, March 23, is a weekend nonworkday for an employee with a regular Monday-Friday work schedule, the agency may direct the employee to perform orderly shutdown activities on the next workday (e.g., Monday, March 25). OMB's general guidance addresses orderly shutdown activities. OMB expects agencies to minimize orderly shutdown activities.

- An agency generally should not direct an employee to perform orderly shutdown work on a day on which the employee had been scheduled to be on leave. If an employee was scheduled to be on leave on the workdays immediately after the lapse commences, the employee is not required to report to duty to perform orderly shutdown activities on a scheduled leave day, even though the leave has been canceled. An agency may allow such an employee to perform any necessary orderly shutdown activities (including receipt of a furlough notice) on the first workday on which the employee had been scheduled to return to duty. Employees may not, however, perform any non-excepted agency work prior to conducting an orderly shutdown. For example, if an employee with a Monday-Friday schedule was scheduled to take leave on Monday, March 25, and return to work on Tuesday, March 26, an agency could require the employee to report to duty to perform any necessary orderly shutdown activities on March 26. (Note: The employee may have performed certain shutdown activities prior to going on leave, which would limit the need to perform orderly shutdown activities after the commencement of the lapse. Additionally, agencies should make every effort to ensure that employees who will not be conducting orderly shutdown activities for several days following the commencement of the lapse are aware of their furlough status during that period.)
- If the employee described in the previous paragraph has a Flexible Work Schedule and a scheduled AWS day off on Monday, March 25, the employee could be allowed to perform orderly shutdown activities on their next workday, Tuesday, March 26, or to move the AWS day off to Tuesday, March 26, so that the employee performs any required orderly shutdown activities on Monday, March 25.
- An agency should avoid directing an employee to perform orderly shutdown activities outside of their "regular" work schedule. If an agency directs an employee to perform orderly shutdown activities on a nonworkday, a holiday, or

the employee's AWS day off, any hours performing orderly shutdown activities would count as hours in applying applicable premium pay rules (e.g., for holiday premium pay or overtime pay). (Since retroactive pay will be provided for furlough hours, furlough hours will count as hours of work in applying overtime rules.)

Excepted Employees

- A lapse-affected employee is allowed to perform work only to perform orderly shutdown activities or other work that has been identified as excepted under guidance issued by OMB. Agencies must apply OMB guidance to determine which employees may perform excepted work activities—i.e., are “excepted employees.”
- If an agency authorizes an excepted employee's absence from duty, the agency should place the employee in furlough status. For example, if an excepted employee is excused from duty on a holiday, the agency should place the employee in furlough status on that day. After the lapse has ended, excepted employees are entitled to retroactive pay at the employee's standard rate pay for furlough periods—without charge to leave, as provided in 31 U.S.C. 1341(c)(2).
- Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1341(c)(3), an excepted employee has the option of requesting leave under 5 U.S.C. chapter 63 (or other applicable law) to cover an authorized absence during a lapse in appropriations, but the payment for that leave still may not be made until after the lapse has ended. However, excepted employees are still entitled to retroactive pay for furlough periods without charge to leave, so we do not anticipate that excepted employees will request to use their leave during a lapse. If an excepted employee receives paid leave to cover a period of absence during a lapse, the employee may not also receive retroactive pay under 31 U.S.C. 1341(c)(2) for that period. (Note: An excepted employee cannot request to use paid leave for an authorized absence on a holiday. An excepted employee must be placed in a furlough status when absent on a holiday.)
- If an excepted employee is directed to perform excepted work during a lapse in appropriations but fails to report for duty, the agency may place the employee in absent-without-leave (AWOL) status for missed work hours, in accordance with agency policy and procedures—instead of placing the employee in furlough

status. No retroactive pay will be provided for AWOL hours, since the standard rate of pay for AWOL hours is zero.

- The sample furlough notices for excepted employees in OPM's shutdown furlough guidance may be modified so that a single notice can be provided to cover any holidays or other approved absences on a regular workday during the lapse in appropriations. Unless the employee's agency specifically directs otherwise, excepted employees should generally report for duty on the next day on which they are scheduled to work.
- Agencies should take into consideration an excepted employee's previously scheduled leave or scheduled holiday time off that takes place during the lapse in appropriations and allow the employee to be furloughed (or approve paid time off under 31 U.S.C. 1341(c)(3), if requested by the employee) during the period the employee had been scheduled to be excused from duty—unless the agency determines there is a need for the employee to report to work to perform excepted activities.
- If an agency directs an excepted employee to work on a holiday or the employee's AWS day off, any hours performing work would count as hours in applying applicable premium pay rules (e.g., for overtime pay or holiday premium pay). Excepted employees will be paid for any earned overtime pay or other premium pay when Congress restores appropriations.