

POLICY FOR CLOSURE OF COUNTY FACILITIES DURING SEVERE INCLEMENT WEATHER AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THE COUNTY'S CONTROL

The Board of Commissioners recognizes that the County has a vested interest in the safety and well-being of its employees. At the same time, this Board recognizes the importance of the services provided to the citizens of Genesee County by County offices. Concurrently, it recognizes that there are significant costs that occur as a result of closing County facilities. For these reasons, it is the general policy of this Board that County facilities will not close during severe inclement weather or other circumstances beyond the County's control.

This document will outline the policies and procedures governing the determination of whether County facilities will close in a particular instance, and the effect of such closure.

I. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms have the meanings prescribed in this Section. Examples are provided for demonstrative purposes and are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

- a. "Circumstances beyond the County's control" means the existence of conditions at a County office or facility making it impossible or unreasonably difficult for County business to be performed at that facility. Examples of circumstances beyond the County's control are the extended loss of essential utilities such as electricity or water, the failure of essential building systems or structures, or a situation qualifying as an "other emergency" as defined by this Policy.
- b. "Essential Employees" are employees within the Building & Grounds Department, the Motor Pool, the Genesee Valley Regional Center, Animal Control, and the Office of the Genesee County Sheriff.
- c. "Severe Inclement Weather" means weather conditions resulting from rain, ice, snow, flood, or other storm that limit travel by County residents and employees, or pose a widespread risk of injury to persons or property. Examples of severe inclement weather include tornadoes and floods, as well as severe thunderstorms, blizzards, or ice storms that make travel dangerous.
- d. "Other Emergency" means a situation posing a widespread risk of injury to persons or property. Examples of other emergencies include fire, explosion, release of hazardous materials, bomb threats, terrorist attack, or mass shooting.

II. Application

This policy applies to all County offices and facilities except the Office of the Sheriff, the Genesee County Jail, the 7th Circuit Court, and the 67th District Court. The Sheriff and the Chief Judge of Genesee County Courts are authorized to develop and implement policies for closure of facilities under their supervision.

The Board Chairperson shall consult with the Sheriff as the County's appointed Emergency Manager and the Chief Judge prior to exercising any authority granted herein.

III. County Employees Expected to Report if Able

Unless excused from work by action of the Board Chairperson as described below, County employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to maintain regular work schedules.

- a. When severe inclement weather exists and the Board Chairperson has not excused County employees from work, employees are expected to plan ahead, where possible, and to allow for extra travel time so as to allow them to arrive promptly and safely at work. Supervisors are authorized to exercise discretion regarding employee punctuality.
- b. During severe inclement weather, employees are expected to use their own reasonable judgment as to whether it is safe to travel to work. Employees shall be permitted to use banked Personal Time, Vacation Time, Comp Time, or to take unpaid time in the event they have determined that conditions are too severe for travel. Any such absence shall be considered an excused absence under any applicable attendance policy or collective bargaining agreement.

IV. Criteria to be Considered for Closure

The Board Chairperson is authorized to close one or more County offices to the public due to severe inclement weather or circumstances beyond the County's control. The Board Chairperson is further authorized to excuse, with pay, employees from their regularly scheduled work shifts where necessary in such severe inclement weather or circumstances beyond the County's control. In the absence or unavailability of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, is authorized to act with the authority of the Chairperson. In the absence of both the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson, the Chairperson of the Governmental Operations Committee of the Board is authorized to act with the authority of the Chairperson.

When considering whether to close any County facility or office, the Board Chairperson shall consider the following:

- a. Public safety;

- b. The safety of County employees;
- c. The public need for the service provided by that facility or office;
- d. The operational needs of the County; and
- e. The expense of a closure.

In addition, the Board Chairperson shall consult with the Sheriff as the County's designated Emergency Manager and the Chief Judge of Genesee County Courts prior to issuing any decision regarding closure.

V. Effects of Closure

When the Chairperson determines that circumstances warrant closure of a County office or facility, he or she shall determine whether the office or facility shall be closed to the public but otherwise remain in operation, or whether the employees at that office or facility will be excused from their regularly scheduled work shifts.

- a. *County Offices Closed to the Public.* If a County office is to be closed to the public pursuant to this policy, employees are expected to report for their regularly scheduled shift unless excused from work by action of the Board Chairperson. The Board Chairperson shall ensure that appropriate public notice of the closure is provided by methods that shall include, but are not limited to, local television and radio stations, and the County's web page and social media sites.
- b. *Employees Responsible for Their Own Safety.* During severe inclement weather conditions, employees are expected to use their own reasonable judgment as to whether it is safe to travel to work. Employees shall be permitted to use banked Personal Time, Vacation Time, Comp Time, or to take unpaid time to account for their absence in the event they have determined that conditions are too severe to travel.
- c. *Excused Absences to Care for Family.* In the event of severe inclement weather or other emergency, employees shall be permitted to leave work to ensure the safety of their families or property. Employees shall be permitted to use banked Personal Time, Vacation Time, Comp Time, or to take unpaid time to account for their absence in the event they do so. Any such absence shall be excused under any applicable attendance policy or collective bargaining agreement. Department Heads are authorized to require employees within their Departments to notify their supervisors prior to leaving work pursuant to this policy.
- d. *Employees Excused from Work.* If the Chairperson determines that employees are excused from their regularly scheduled work shifts pursuant to this policy:

- i. Employees subject to a collective bargaining agreement shall be treated in accordance with the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreement.
 - ii. Other employees shall be paid for the straight time hours that they were scheduled to work. Employees who were not scheduled to be at work because of approved Personal, Vacation, or Comp time will be paid in accordance with that approved time off, and their Personal, Vacation, or Comp time bank shall be reduced accordingly.
- e. *Essential Employees.* If the Chairperson determines that employees at a particular County office or facility are to be excused from their regularly scheduled shifts, essential employees assigned to that office or facility are not so excused unless expressly included by the Chairperson.

Adopted May 2014.
Amended January 2018.