

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

1. PURPOSE

1.1 UHCL makes every effort to maintain normal operations as scheduled. At times, however, serious emergencies may warrant closing the university and canceling scheduled classes.

1.2 This policy specifies the regulations and guidelines that are to be observed by university employees in the event of an emergency closing.

2. POLICY

2.1 A decision to close the university on a temporary emergency basis may be made when severe weather conditions or other unforeseen occurrences present serious risk to university students and employees, property, or operations.

2.2 The decision to close the university is the responsibility of the President or a designee. In making such a decision, the President or designee may consult qualified authorities both internal and external to UHCL. Any decision for an unscheduled university closing will be transmitted immediately to the Office of the Chancellor of the University of Houston System and to the UH System Office of Communications.

2.3 In the absence of the President, delegation of authority for a decision to close the university is passed to the Senior Vice President/Provost and then the Vice President for Administration & Finance.

2.4 An emergency closing of the university results in the automatic cancellation of events scheduled on campus during the period the university is closed. The university is not open to students or other personnel except for emergency ride-out crews for the duration of the emergency closing. Any faculty or staff employee who enters the university during a period of emergency closing does so at his or her own risk.

2.5 During any emergency closing, certain personnel may be required to remain on campus to safeguard university property and operational systems. Employees of the UHCL Police Department, UHCL Facilities Management and Construction, and Environmental Health and Safety are informed upon employment that as a condition of employment, they are subject to appointment to serve on emergency ride-out crews in the event of a university emergency. Failure of these employees to be available to serve in an emergency or refusal to report for duty if appointed may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

2.6 During an emergency closing, provisions are made for shelter, sleeping quarters, food and communications for those serving on emergency ride-out crews. In recognition of the unusual nature of this service and its inherent risks, including the possibility of safety hazards associated with the work itself, non-exempt employees on emergency ride out crews are compensated in accordance with the UHCL "Compensation for Emergency Ride-Out Crews" policy.

2.7 If an employee must be absent from work because of weather conditions not necessitating a university closing, the employee will be required to use approved annual leave or earned compensatory time to remain in a pay status during the absence. An employee is not authorized to use sick leave to cover an absence due to inclement weather, unless the absence would otherwise qualify for use of sick leave. In unusual circumstances, the employee may be eligible for emergency leave which must be

approved through the head of the department, the vice president, and the president. The final approval for emergency leave rests with the president.

3. POLICY PROVISIONS

3.1 Notification. If a university closing occurs while the university is in session, the decision to close will be communicated to faculty, staff, and students by use of various methods including e-mail, telephone, word of mouth, and a public address system as appropriate. If a closing occurs while the university is not in session, the decision will be conveyed to administrative officials who, in turn, will notify faculty and staff members within their areas of responsibility. UHCL Emergency Information text and/or voice messages regarding the status of the university will be sent as appropriate to update faculty, staff and students. Media coverage enhances this effort and conveys the information to the community-at-large.

It is the responsibility of the employee to verify university closings and openings at the university's Web site (www.uhcl.edu), the UHCL Emergency Information Web site (www.UHCLemergency.info) or the UHCL Hotline (281-283-2221).

Employees who are required to serve on the emergency ride-out crews will be notified as far in advance as possible of the emergency assignment.

3.2 During a period of official emergency closing, regular benefits-eligible employees are paid at the regular rate of pay. If an employee elects to leave work prior to an official closing or remain absent past the official re-opening, the lost time must be charged to accrued annual leave or earned compensatory time. If the employee does not have sufficient annual leave or compensatory time to cover such an absence, the employee is considered to be on leave without pay. All such absences must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. An absence related to an emergency closing which continues past what is authorized may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

3.3 UHCL Director of Communications, or designee, is responsible for coordinating university closing or opening announcements with UHS Communications as well as notifying the local news media. Contacting the media in a coordinated fashion is necessary to minimize the possibility of public confusion or misunderstanding, given the similarity of institutional names and the likelihood that individual UHS universities will make different decisions regarding closures.

3.4 UHCL's Chief of Police or designee is responsible for monitoring the National Weather Service System for severe weather reports as well as identifying other risks to the physical safety and well-being of the university community. This information is used by the president or designee to make decisions about closing and opening the university.

3.5 Nothing in this policy may be used as the basis for discrimination or retaliation against any individual or group.

William A. Staples
Title: President
University of Houston-Clear Lake

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