



Protocols for Changing the Operating Status of the Federal Government in Washington, DC

December 2013

Protocols for Changing the Federal Operating Status in DC

- n Individual agencies have the authority to release their employees on a building-by-building basis.
(41 CFR 102-74.255 – Facility Management)
- n To facilitate a consistent approach region-wide, traditionally Federal, State and local authorities have looked to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for determining and coordinating the Operating Status of the Federal Government across the DC area.
- n All Hazards Plan, but primary emphasis is weather related.

Factors and Venue for Situational Awareness

n Operating Status decisions are based upon careful weighing of:

- q Safety and security of the Federal workforce and National Capital Region community
- q Need to maintain Continuity of Government to the maximum extent possible

n Primary forum for situational awareness is the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) Conference Call.

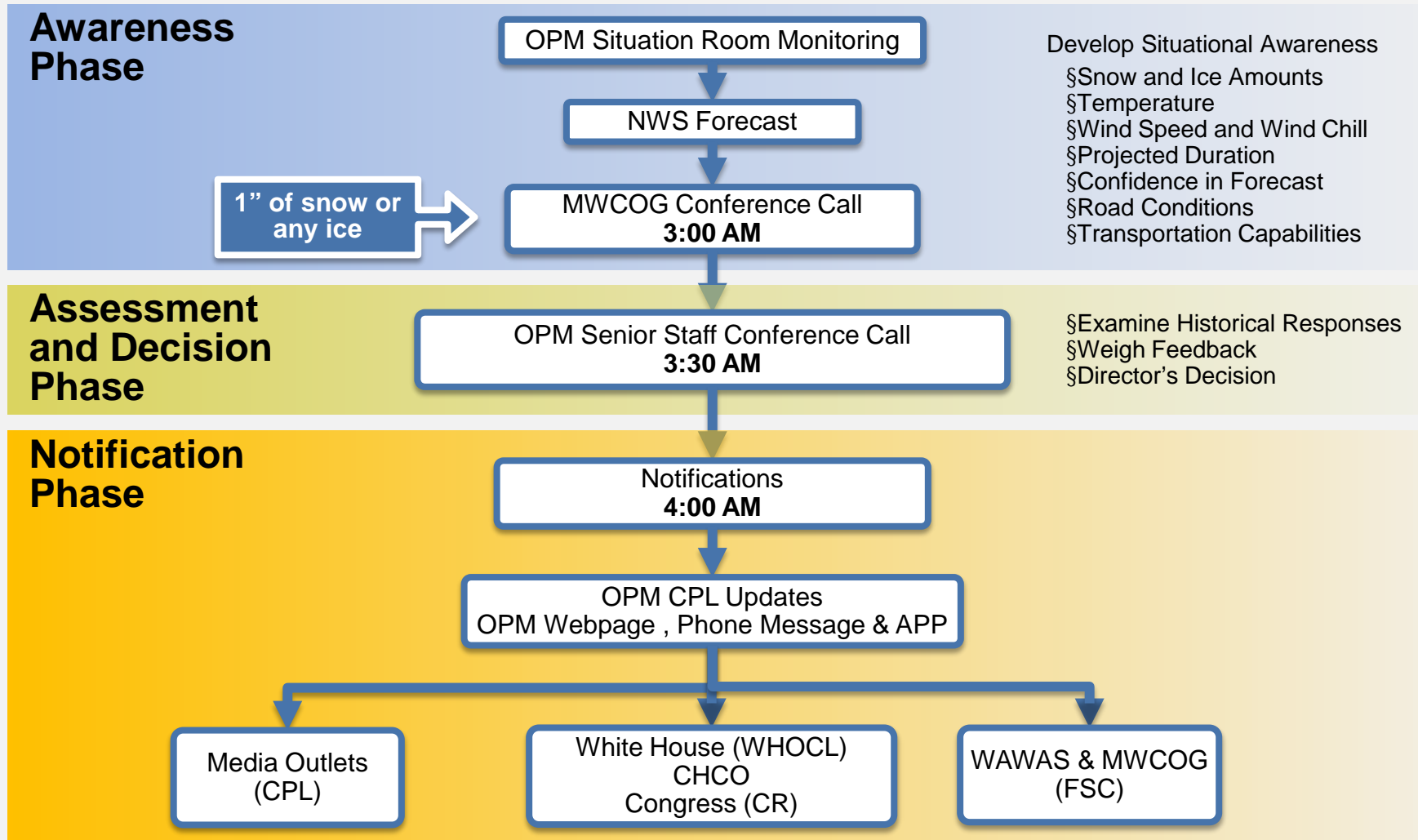


Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments
mwcog.org

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Member Jurisdictions



Decision and Notification Process



OPM Operating Status Announcements

OPEN:

- n **OPEN** – Employees are expected to report to their worksites or begin telework on time
- n **OPEN** – with option for unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework

DELAYED ARRIVAL:

- n **OPEN** – XX hour(S) delayed arrival – with option for Unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework
- n **OPEN** - Employees Should Remain Off the Roads Until XX:XX. Federal Offices Will Open at YY:YY. Employees have the option for unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework

OPM Operating Status Announcements

EARLY DISSMISSAL:

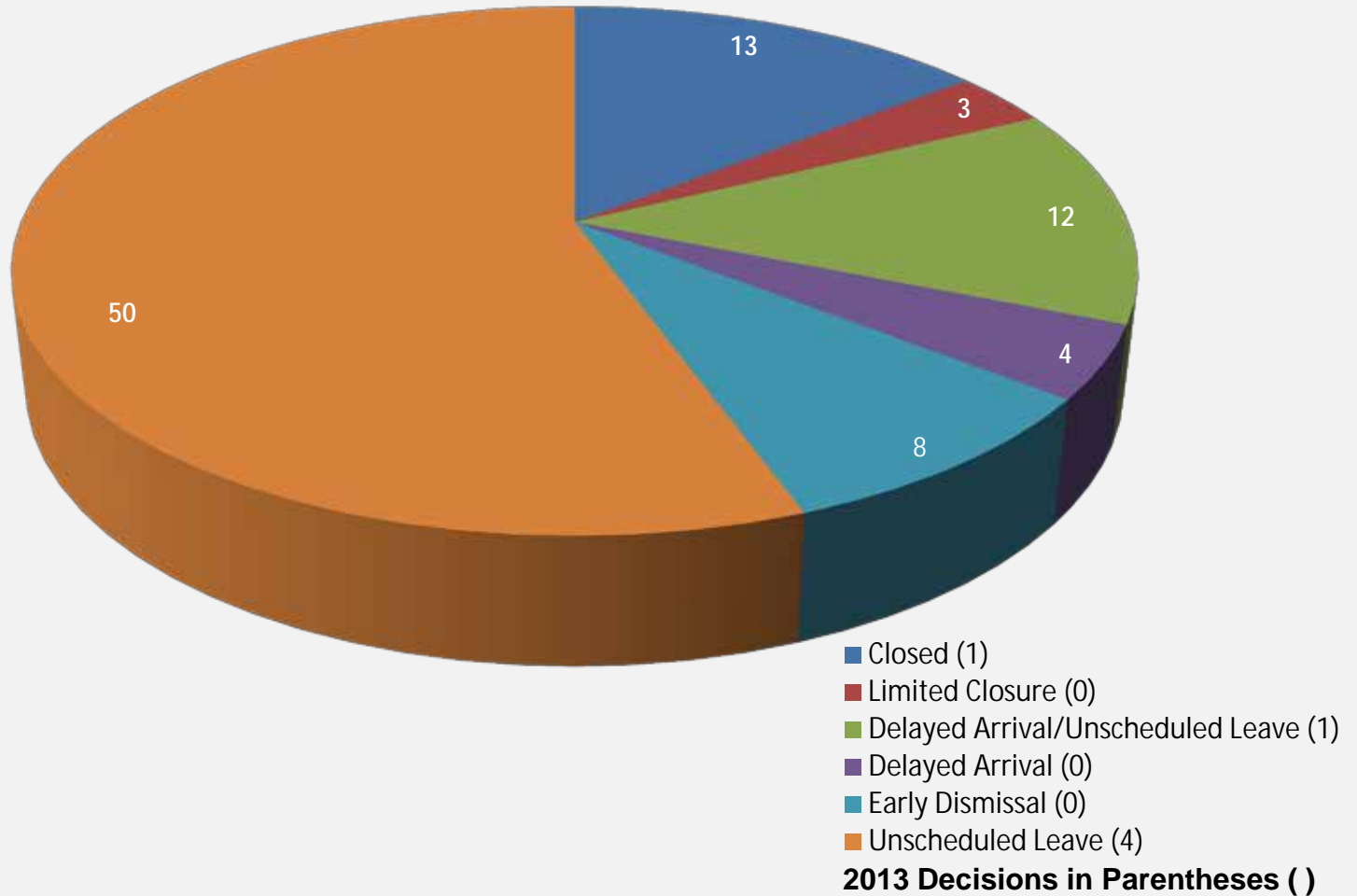
- n **OPEN** – XX hour(s) staggered early departure
- n **OPEN** – XX hour(s) staggered early departure – all employees must depart no later than XX:XX at which time Federal offices are Closed
- n **IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE** – Federal Offices are Closed

CLOSURE:

- n **CLOSED** – Federal Offices are Closed
- n **SHELTER-IN-PLACE** – Federal offices in the Washington, DC, area are under Shelter-in-place procedures and are Closed

Historical Decision Data

OPM Decisions 2000-2013



Highlights of the 2013-2014 Procedures

- n The Procedures cover Executive branch agencies within the “Capital Beltway” and are revised annually based on recommendations from an Interagency working group, input from national labor unions, and comments from Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
- n This year, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will be focusing on educating the Federal agencies and employees on the *Procedures*, including—
 - q The Importance of Following OPM Operating Status Announcements
 - q Telework Policies and Procedures
 - q Communication of Expectations
 - q Updated on Delayed Arrival Announcement

Importance of Following OPM Operating Status Announcements

- n Since the early 1980's, the Director of OPM has made the final decision on the Federal Government's operating status in the Washington, DC, area in the event of area-wide work disruptions
- n Agencies should avoid independent action because changes in the commuting hours of Federal employees can result in dramatic disruption of the highway and mass transit systems

Telework Policies and Procedures

- n Unscheduled telework is now a standard human resources tool in OPM's Procedures that was first introduced in conjunction with the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (Act)
- n The Act requires agencies to incorporate telework into their Continuity of Operation Plans (COOP)
- n OPM advises agencies to make telework a standard part of all agency emergency planning to ensure the Government is well positioned to carry out its essential functions for COOP

Telework Policies and Procedures (continued)

- n To ensure telework is incorporated into their emergency procedures, agencies should—
 - § Encourage employees to enter into written telework agreements
 - § Communicate expectations before the emergency situation occurs
 - § Practice and test equipment and procedures regularly throughout the year
- n Telework allows a greater number of employees to work during emergency situations without compromising their safety

Telework Policies and Procedures (continued)

- n For continuity of operations purposes, agencies should be taking steps to require employees who are telework-ready, and permitted to use unscheduled telework throughout the year, to telework during days when Federal offices are closed
- n This migration will support the Act, maintain productivity during closures, and keep our employees safe

Communication of Expectations

- n OPM's operating status announcements are only effective if each supervisor and employee understands what the announcements mean and how to react
- n Agencies must update their internal policies, including COOP plans and telework agreements, to reflect employee requirements under emergency operating procedures
- n Employees must understand and be able to act immediately under their own agency's procedures and collective bargaining agreements

Communication of Expectations (continued)

- n Agencies must provide clear guidance on human resources flexibilities that are available to employees during specific agency operating procedures:
 - § Unscheduled Telework/Unscheduled Leave
 - § Leave without pay
 - § Alternative Work Schedule Day Off

Updated Delayed Arrival Announcement

- n Last winter's delayed arrival announcement: **“Open – Delayed Arrival – Employees Should Remain Off the Roads Until XX:XX. Federal Offices Will Open at YY:YY. Employees Have the Option for Unscheduled Leave or Unscheduled Telework”**
- n New delayed arrival announcement: **“Open – Delayed Arrival – Employees Must Report To Their Office No Later Than XX:XX – with Option for Unscheduled Leave or Unscheduled Telework”**

Questions ?

The updated version of the Procedures and additional information is available at:

n <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/notices/>