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UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20415

May 16, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMEN OF FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARDS AND  
FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATIONS

SUBJECT: POLICY ON DISMISSAL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES BECAUSE OF  
HAZARDOUS WEATHER

ration

The Commission has just completed testifying on S. 1157 before a subcommittee of the Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee. S. 1157 would require agencies to excuse from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave Federal employees in areas covered by official warning of imminent danger of hurricane or other inherently dangerous weather conditions.

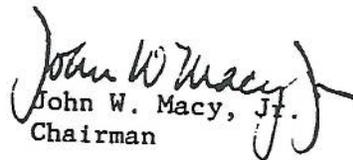
The Commission opposed the enactment of this legislation because (1) existing authority for action makes the legislation unnecessary; (2) there is no evidence that any harm has come from the exercise of current administrative authority; and (3) mandatory legislation such as this is likely to result in unnecessary dismissal of employees.

The support of the bill by employee organizations generates from the lack of uniform treatment of employees in the same localities under similar circumstances. Each representative who testified indicated that there were examples of inequity in treatment and instances of confusion stemming from the exercise of the present authority. In our testimony it was pointed out that Federal Executive Boards and Federal Executive Associations have studied or are studying the possibility of local guidelines for hazardous weather dismissals, and thus help bring about uniformity of treatment to employees in each area affected by adverse weather, whether the adverse weather results from a blizzard in Butte, a tornado in Topeka, a hurricane in Homestead, or a snowstorm in Chicago.

Therefore, I would like each Board and Association to study the problem as it applies in its area of concern, and to develop policy guidance which would lead to consistency in the dismissal of employees because of adverse weather. The policy guides should take into consideration the timing of the order of dismissal, the requirements for safeguarding Federal property (including the time necessary to close down and make secure the office spaces or other Federal property

or equipment), communication to employees, and any other elements necessary to effect a balance between the needs of the employees' safety, the needs of local officials to have the streets clear, and the needs of the Government to accomplish its work and to protect its property.

In order that I may know the progress made in connection with this assignment, I would appreciate your forwarding to me no later than August 1, 1967, a copy of your policy statement and your plans for its application. In this connection you may be interested in noting the format (as well as the treatment provided for employees) set out in the attached White House policy statement on the dismissal of Federal employees in the Washington Metropolitan Area because of hazardous weather.

  
John W. Macy, Jr.  
Chairman

Attachment

## Appendix A. Hazardous Weather Dismissal Policy

*The following memorandum and its attachment, addressed from the White House to heads of executive departments and agencies, covers the Federal Government's hazardous weather dismissal policy for its employees.*

**To Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies**

**Subject: Hazardous Weather Dismissal Policy for Washington Metropolitan Area**

Since 1951 there has been in effect a centralized procedure for the coordination and control of group dismissals of Federal employees in the Washington Metropolitan Area to reduce serious and hazardous traffic conditions occurring as a result of snow or ice storms. This policy has been reviewed by the District of Columbia Government and the White House and is reissued as an attachment to this letter.

To avoid confusion on the part of employees, it is important that all departments and agencies

1. Designate those employees who must continue on the job regardless of any general dismissal authorization.
2. Make determinations with regard to the applicability of this policy to fringe locations within the metropolitan area and, if warranted, grant permission for independent dismissal for such locations.

Departments and agencies are requested to review and revise their internal procedures as may be necessary in the light of these procedures. It is especially important that advance determinations be made and communicated in writing to the affected employees with respect to those activities which cannot suspend or reduce operations when the District of Columbia recommends that employees generally be excused for all or part of a day.

By direction of the President:

T. J. REARDON, JR.  
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE  
February 16, 1962

Attachment

*Text of attachment to White House memorandum of February 16, 1962, on hazardous weather dismissals.*

### **Control of Dismissals During Hazardous Weather in Washington**

Severe snow or storm or icing conditions on streets, highways, and bridges in the Washington area can lead to traffic congestion unusually dangerous to health and safety. Uncoordinated decisions by individual departments and agencies to dismiss employees early under these circumstances can serve only to aggravate traffic congestion and hazards.

Therefore, when such conditions occur, deter-

mination of the need for early dismissals of Federal employees shall be based on the finding by the District Engineer Commissioner and a decision by the designated Assistant to the President that the condition of streets and highways in the metropolitan area is, or will be, such that *early staggered dismissals of employees are essential to reduce the probability of extremely serious and hazardous traffic congestion and driving conditions* and the following procedure shall be observed:

### *Early Dismissals*

1. The District Engineer Commissioner shall immediately notify the Executive Director of the Civil Service Commission of a determination that early dismissals are warranted, specifying the amount of time the regular closing hours should be advanced. The Executive Director, through the Secretariat of the Interagency Advisory Group, shall promptly telephone the decision to the Director of Personnel (or his previously designated representative) in each department or agency.

2. When so informed, each department or agency may excuse, without charge to annual leave, as many of its employees who are in an actual duty status as practicable for the *specified period of time prior to the agency's normal closing time.*

Department and agency officials in acting in accordance with this authorization should give due consideration to the fact that extra public transportation probably will not be available at the earlier dismissal hour and so advise employees affected.

3. In view of the automatic features of this procedure any determination on early dismissal will be communicated in a matter of minutes. To avoid congestion of telephone circuits, employees shall be instructed not to call the offices responsible for communicating these emergency messages. Department and agency officials are also requested to refrain from calling the offices involved in this procedure.

### *Conditions Developing During Nonwork Hours*

Snow or ice conditions developing during the night or before an employee's regular work hours should not ordinarily be the basis for absence from work, but under unusually severe weather conditions department and agency officials may excuse tardiness they consider not reasonably avoidable.

There may be very rare occasions when a storm during off-duty hours renders road conditions impassable to heavy traffic so that it is deemed essential that all Federal employees, except for those engaged in services which cannot be suspended or interrupted, not report for work. Under such circumstances, the procedures that will be followed are:

1. The Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia shall advise the designated Assistant to the President that conditions are such that only personnel engaged in services which cannot be suspended or interrupted should be required to report for work.

2. The decision of the Assistant to the President will be immediately released to the area by the radio, television, and press.

Any day that employees are excused from reporting for work under the circumstances related under this heading shall be a nonwork day for leave purposes but shall not be a holiday for any purpose.

### *Discretion of Agencies To Meet Local Weather or Traffic Conditions in Outlying Areas*

It is recognized that some establishments situated in the periphery of the metropolitan area may be subject to substantially different local weather or traffic conditions. Since it is not practical to define the point at which city conditions cease to predominate, any questions on the application of this policy to peripheral locations in the Washington area are left to the discretion of the departments and agencies concerned.

### *Agency Planning*

Each department and agency is requested to develop internal policies and procedures for carrying out this plan and for informing employees of its operation and applicability.

To do this it is necessary to designate and inform in advance those personnel of those activities which must continue in operation regardless of weather conditions or any public announcement under this policy. Employees also should be advised that it is particularly important during winter months that adequate fuel be kept in their vehicles to eliminate a major cause of stalled vehicles during periods of severe traffic congestion.

While it is expected that the decision to excuse employees for a full day will seldom be made, it is urgent that departments and agencies make adequate preparation for the continuation of such services as they determine must be performed without interruption or confusion.