

# Scenario Planning for the University of Illinois Library Regarding Inclement Weather

February 20, 2024

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## Language from the Existing Campus Policy:

As a matter of policy, the University of Illinois does not fully close. The residential and research aspects of operations make it impossible to close the entire university. However, periods of inclement weather often result in conditions that make travel difficult and at times hazardous, especially for those employees who live outside the local community. In addition, inclement weather can create other conditions that affect an employee's ability to report to work (e.g., childcare issues associated with school closings).

In general, the university encourages employees to carefully consider their personal safety and local conditions in determining their ability to commute to work in extreme weather. Members of the university community are encouraged to utilize the Illinois Department of Transportation's "Getting Around Illinois" website to access Winter Road Conditions at: <http://www.gettingaroundillinois.com/>.

Please remember to drive slowly and cautiously in winter weather conditions. Employees whose work can be completed remotely may work from home with supervisory approval. If an essential employee is unable to report to work due to weather conditions, and is not approved to work remotely, the employee is expected to use the appropriate leave benefit based on their employment group as noted in the table below. Extreme weather does not change the need for an individual employee to notify their supervisor of the absence. Normal leave reporting processes and requirements apply to leave used to cover weather-related absences.

Employment Group	Leave Benefit Options
Overtime-Eligible Civil Service	Vacation Floating Holiday (full-day only) Accrued compensatory time Approved absence without pay
Overtime-Exempt Employees—Civil Service and Academic	Vacation Floating Holiday (full-day only) If no leave available, consult with Labor & Employee Relations.

However, as noted above, there are some operations at the university that must continue regardless of weather conditions. Employees in essential units will also need to reference departmental policies as they may have expectations that will supersede the general provisions of this communication.

Source: <https://emails.illinois.edu/newsletter/25/644145325.html> (includes FAQ updated 11-2023)

**Library Scenarios and Planned Responses:**

The following scenarios are predicated on the previously established understanding that Library employees fall into the non-essential category of employees in terms of campus closures. Please note that no library unit should close to users without consultation and approval of the appropriate AUL/Director. Units should refrain from making any determination for employees in any classification as to who is eligible or available to work. All classifications of employees need to determine for themselves their own safety based on individual circumstances.

The Library recognizes that the responsibilities of some classifications of employees may require more of an onsite presence than others, and that some individuals for a variety of reasons may have fewer opportunities for remote work than others. The University Library strongly encourages all Library employees, regardless of classification or ability to work remotely, to consider their own personal safety first when determining whether or not to report to work during inclement weather, with no negative repercussions for that decision.

## **Scenario One: Inclement Weather Arrives During a Normal Business Day, and Campus Suspends Normal Operations, Allowing Non-Essential Employees to Leave Campus Without Use of Personal Benefit Time**

**NOTE:** This is the Library's existing practice under current University policy, and suspending normal operations may not always be coupled with canceling classes.

In this scenario, previous language from the campus stated that, **subject to operational needs, non-essential employees are permitted to leave campus at a particular time and complete the workday remotely or without use of personal benefit time.** Once campus makes a decision to halt normal operations the University Library closes all physical locations and all services are suspended for the duration. All permanent employees (faculty, academic professionals, civil service professional, and all civil service classifications) are paid for any hours they would have worked during the remainder of that day, while all non-permanent, hourly employees (student assistants, grad hourlies, academic hourlies, extra help, and graduate assistants, would need to make up the hours on a later date if desired.

### **Planned Response:**

When the University halts normal operations, the Library fully closes all locations and suspends staffed services. The Library web site and most digital collections and other content will remain available to support research and teaching. The Library will set guidelines for reopening that do not require employees to return until campus has had a chance to determine conditions for the following day.

## **Scenario Two: Inclement Weather Arrives During a Normal Weekday, and Campus Does Not Permit Employees to Leave Without Use of Personal Benefits (classes may or may not be canceled, language around essential operations may vary)**

In this scenario, campus does not suspend normal operations and allow employees to leave campus without the use of personal benefits. While the weather may not be significant enough to send non-essential employees home, it may be unsafe for many employees to travel to or from work, local K-12 schools (and daycares) may close impacting employee ability to work, and many employees for any number of legitimate reasons are unable to physically report to work as planned. Following campus policy, in this scenario employees use their own benefit time based on their own assessment of their safety/ability to work.

If a significant number of employees determine that they will not be able to report to work the University Library will likely need to close to users or shorten the hours of some of its physical locations. Those decisions will be made by the Dean or her designees, in conjunction with unit heads or their designees. Some of the smaller locations may close to users first, as they typically have fewer on-site employees than larger 'hub' libraries and few options for alternative coverage. If more locations close to patrons, and weather conditions potentially intensify, the University Library will likely not have enough staff in the right locations or with the right skill sets to keep the doors open in a meaningful way.

**NOTE:** It is existing Library procedure to close to patrons some physical locations if/when there are not sufficient employees available at a particular location.

**Planned Response:**

In this scenario, once more than a few locations are unable to remain open to the public, the Dean of Libraries and University Librarian will make a decision as necessary to close physical locations to users and provide public services at either A) the Orange Room within the Main Library, or B) the Orange Room, Grainger Engineering Library Information Center, and Funk ACES, or a subset dependent on actual circumstances. Employees who can access and safely work in their usual workspace even if their library location is closed to users may do so unless needed to help staff the open location(s). Employees who have been approved by their supervisor to work remotely for the day, whether or not they have an existing remote/hybrid work agreement on file, may do so. Employees who report to work and either do not wish to or can't safely work in their usual workspaces should coordinate with their supervisor/unit head to work at the open location(s) for the remainder of their shift. Assigned responsibilities may include building monitoring to keep patrons from entering closed portions of buildings, etc. Library on-site services are significantly reduced, but online services such as chat reference remain available with employees working on or off site. There are no associated changes to pay policies with this response, employees who are not present on site or working remotely will need to use benefit time or take leave as described in the campus policy.

**Scenario Three: Evenings, Weekends, Intersessions, or Non-peak Periods**

In this scenario campus is unlikely to cancel classes and/or send employees home for the day without the use of personal benefits, relying instead on individual judgment calls by the far fewer faculty/instructors, open offices, etc. Inclement weather is severe enough to cause a significant number of employees to not report to work. There are fewer locations and employees typically available to begin with during these periods of time, so a fewer number of employees not able to safely report to work has greater impact. Safety concerns are greater overall, as snow removal and visibility decrease, and personal security concerns are heightened.

**Planned Response:**

In this scenario the University Library may reduce hours and close multiple locations, but with fewer locations open during these periods that may require a quick decision to close most if not all locations. In these circumstances, the Dean of Libraries & University Librarian will make a decision to fully close the University Library as necessary, reopening as usual at the start of the next business day or when the weather abates if on a weekend. Employees who were scheduled to work and had not indicated they were going to use benefit time and are unable to work remotely will be paid for the scheduled time missed.

**Communication Plan:**

- Unit heads and designees responsible for various library physical locations will be added to a Teams channel designed for communication during and documentation of all inclement weather event decisions. Teams will be used so that conversation threads remain accessible regardless

of when individuals drop in/out of the room and for easy access to relevant documentation. Decisions made through the Teams channel will also be communicated out by email as appropriate, but unit heads or designees must make decisions in conjunction with Library administration and communication of any closures to the public will be centralized within library administration.

- Individual employees with questions about reporting to work, remote work, work assignments or other inclement weather event concerns should be in touch with their supervisor/unit head and if there are remaining questions should contact Library HR.
- If a decision is made by library administration in conjunction with unit heads to close specific locations, unit heads or their designates should update web hours for that location, post physical signs in the space, post on social media and to departmental lists if applicable, and ensure that all unit employees are aware of the closure. Library administration will centralize email notices about closures using the new [LIBALLEMPLOYEE-L@lists.illinois.edu](mailto:LIBALLEMPLOYEE-L@lists.illinois.edu), and the dean will contact other impacted deans as appropriate. All library employees should also note that if weather conditions are unfavorable it is best practice to check email before reporting to work to help ensure that no unnecessary travel occurs.
- For the Main Library, Central Access Services will make PA announcements in keeping with standard closing procedures if an early closure is announced.
- Units who are collocated or are closely-affiliated with other groups or organizations should help ensure that any changes to library hours and services get communicated as appropriate. As an example, TLAS should ensure that the Writer's Workshop is informed.
- Library Facilities will coordinate with campus card services to make arrangements regarding any changes to Library building locking/unlocking schedules.
- The Library's Chief Communications Officer will coordinate with the web team to add an announcement to the Library homepage.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Question 1: Will employees be penalized if they use benefit time to be out during inclement weather?**

Answer: No, as stated in campus inclement weather policy and reiterated here, employees in many instances need to determine for themselves their own safety in terms of reporting to work during inclement weather events and have multiple options to use benefits or take leave. Employees should be encouraged to use the best option for their individual circumstances.

### **Question 2: If an employee has already been approved for an excused absence on the day of inclement weather, and the Library ends up closing, does the employee still need to use benefits to cover?**

Answer: Yes, any employee who was already planning to use benefits (vacation or sick leave) must use benefits to cover their scheduled shift.

**Question 3: What happens for student or other hourly employees if the Library or specific units close?**

Answer: The Library is unable to pay non-permanent hourly employees for hours not worked, supervisors may allow hourly employees to make up hours on a later date.

**Question 4: Can a non-permanent hourly employee who has permission to work remotely do so if the Library is closed to patrons?**

Answer: Yes, hourly employees who have been approved to work remotely by their unit head may work remotely.

**Question 5: If the Library doesn't fully close, can an employee who may not have benefits available, can't work remotely, and does not want to take leave without pay make up any of the hours at a later date?**

Answer: The answer will vary depending on individual circumstances and applicable union policies, supervisors should check directly with Library Human Resources.

**Question 6: How do inclement weather decisions impact fully remote employees?**

Answer: There is likely not a one size fits all answer here. Consideration should be given to where remote employees are located and how local weather may impact their own ability to work and also whether their work makes sense to continue if it is in collaboration with other library employees/services. Unit heads/supervisors should reach out to Library HR if there are questions about individual circumstances.

**Question 7: Does an inclement weather decision affect employees who are either scheduled to or have the ability to work on a hybrid schedule?**

Answer: In most instances Library employees who have the ability to work on a hybrid schedule will be able and expected to work remotely during an inclement weather event unless specifically needed to help keep a physical location open.

**Question 8: What should an employee do whose scheduled start time is near the time that campus is ceasing normal operations?**

Answer: If an employee is scheduled to begin work near the time that campus is ceasing normal operations they should contact their unit head/supervisor for assistance in determining the best course of action. Individual circumstances may vary widely, as might the specifics of the inclement weather event. Supervisors are encouraged to reach out to Library Human Resources with questions.

**Question 9: If normal operations cease and the physical libraries close, when should Library units plan to reopen the following day pending another decision by campus? This is particularly important for our 24 hour locations or when moving into the weekend.**

Answer: The Dean of Libraries and University Librarian will, in conjunction with campus administration, inform the Library regarding plans for reopening.

**Question 10: If the Library is closing some but not all locations what remote services are key to keep running?**

Answer: Chat Reference is one key service to keep running, and there will need to be additional advance planning to coordinate how that might happen onsite or remotely.

**Question 11: What about locations housed in non-Library buildings? If the building closes does the library automatically close?**

Answer: There may be some variation depending on the specific location and accessibility of the library unit in question, but if the library is inaccessible that location would close and employees would have the option to work in their usual location or in one of the hub locations depending on the circumstances.

**Question 12: Are there additional guidelines supervisors should use in granting remote work under these circumstances?**

Answer: It is not necessary for an employee to have an existing remote or hybrid work agreement in place to be granted the option to work remotely during an inclement weather event. Unit heads/supervisors should take into consideration the availability of appropriate tasks that might be conducted remotely, the ability of the individual to work remotely including availability of necessary computing resources, and make a decision on the day as to what might be possible though advance unit planning will be helpful.