

CLOSING, SUSPENSION, OR MODIFICATION OF COUNTY OPERATIONS ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS

Objective: To establish policy for suspending or modifying county functions or operations, and/ or closing county divisions, departments, and/or facilities during extraordinary situations or conditions and to assure that the capability exists to continue essential functions in response to a broad spectrum of emergencies or operational interruptions.

Policy/Procedure Number: 01-42

Reference:
(All Applicable Federal, State and Local Laws)

New York State (NYS) Emergency Management and Homeland Security Authorities:

Effective Date: November 21, 1995

- NY Executive Laws, Article 2-B, Section 29-b
- NY Executive Laws, Article 2-B, Section 23
- NY Executive Laws, Article 2-B, Section 24
- NY Executive Laws, Article 2-B, Section 25
- NY Executive Laws, Article 2-B, Section 27
- NY General Municipal Laws, Article 10, Section 209-f2
- NY Civil Service Laws, Article 5, Section 82-b

Responsible Department: County Administration

Tompkins County Legislature:

“Approval of Designation of Successors” resolution, which is revised and adopted at the beginning of each operating year.

Collective Bargaining Agreements in Tompkins County:

- CSEA White Collar Unit Local 855 Agreement
- CSEA Blue Collar Unit Local 8900-1 of Local 855 Agreement
- Tompkins County Correction Officers Union Local 2062 Agreement
- The Employees Union of the Tompkins County Sheriff’s Department Agreement

Legislative Policy Statement:

It is the policy of Tompkins County government to sustain essential services to residents and businesses at all times. However, there may arise extraordinary situations or conditions that, out of a paramount concern for the safety and welfare of County employees and the citizens they serve, warrant the closure of some or all County operations and/or facilities. In the event of such a closure and/or disruption of public service, it is the County’s policy to rapidly re-deploy its labor force and resources to resume essential services.

Modified Date (s): November 2009

Resolution No.: 10-27

General Information:

The County Administrator shall have the sole authority to formally suspend County operations or to close some or all County offices. The decision to close, suspend, or modify County operations may be coordinated with the Chair of the Legislature and authorized public safety officials, and if required, authorized public works and information technology services personnel. The potential impact on the personal safety and welfare of county employees, the individuals they serve, and Tompkins County residents will be the primary criteria for making decisions for suspending or modifying operations and/or closing county departments or facilities.

The "Procedure" section, below, describes processes for managing the closing of a single division or department, multiple divisions or departments, all divisions or departments, and/or related facilities as the result of natural or man-made disasters or emergencies or other situations and circumstances impacting functions and operations.

Definitions:

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP): A formal plan prepared by each County department explaining how that department will continue essential functions across a broad spectrum of emergencies.

Extraordinary Situations: Natural or man-made conditions or events that are outside the parameters of accepted norms causing impacts on operations or interruption of services.

Essential Employees: Employees, as designated by their department head based on the situation, whose skills and abilities are needed for supporting emergency or critical functions during an extraordinary situation (e.g., police/deputies, emergency response dispatchers, firefighters, cleaning staff, maintenance staff, equipment operators, equipment mechanics, and nurses).

Procedure:

Section I. —Closing Considerations

The following list contains typical examples when closing considerations would apply and what processes would be followed, and serves as guidance for managing other situations not specifically referenced:

Weather Related: As Tompkins County is located in central New York, it is expected that there will be weather conditions that will involve travel in less than ideal conditions. However, extraordinarily hazardous weather events may occur that may warrant the closure of some or all County facilities. In the event such weather events are forecast with probable certainty, the County Administrator may consult with the Chair of the County Legislature, Sheriff, Public Works Commissioner, and Director of Emergency Response and determine whether to close some or all County facilities and/or operations. The decision will be made as far in advance as possible to allow notification to department heads and employees, and to allow for an orderly closure.

Closing of the Roads: The closure of some roads, but not all, does not cause the closure of County operations other than those that may be directly affected by the road closure. The decision to close roads is determined by the appropriate authority (currently, the Chief of Police of the City of Ithaca for roads within the Ithaca city limits, and the Sheriff for roads outside of the city).

When the decision is made to close all roads in the county, all non-public safety county divisions, departments, and facilities not engaged in responding to the emergency conditions or in 24/7 operations (such as the Jail) will be closed for the same period of time that the roads are closed. During the period in which all roads are closed, employees of divisions, departments, and facilities other than those exceptions described above are not to report to work unless directed to do so by their department head based on their essential role in maintaining the continuity of vital government operations.

Facilities Related: When in the judgment of the County Administrator, who in consultation with the Facilities Director, Information Technology Services (ITS) Director, and the relevant department head(s), determines that a county-owned, leased, or maintained facility is unusable, the County Administrator will close the facility, and assist in making arrangements to relocate the operations of any division or department in that facility to another location. The relevant department head(s) will notify the impacted employees as soon as a decision is made that alters normal work processes and locations.

Immediate Threat to Safety: Any acts that threaten the immediate safety of the employees, building users, adjacent residents, and visitors will be addressed as high priority. Department heads or their designee(s) will have the responsibility for getting all employees and building visitors out of harms way as quickly as possible, getting them away from the immediate area (e.g., rapid exit of the building, or removal of departmental and personal vehicles adjacent to the building), and notifying emergency response. As soon as possible, the County Administrator will be notified of the situation and advised of the decisions made by the department head(s) or designee(s). The County Administrator or his/her designee, in consultation with the relevant department head(s) or designee(s) and appropriate public safety officials, will make the determination to close a facility or suspend department operations for reasons related to the threat to safety. Please refer to the County Safety Policy for additional information: <http://www.tompkins-co.org/msds/>.

Epidemic or Pandemic: There may arise situations in which the spread of serious infectious diseases may warrant the closure of one or more County facilities and/or operations. In the event of such situations, the County Administrator will consult with the Chair of the County Legislature, the Director of Public Health, and the County's Medical Director to determine if closure is appropriate and, if so, to implement a closure plan consistent with advice provided by public health professionals. In the event of such closures, employees may be called upon to assist as needed in roles outside their normal duties and work locations.

Section II. —Continuity of Operations Plan

On or before June 2010, each division and department will develop and maintain an updated Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). In the event of extraordinary conditions or situations that will have impacts on staffing, departments will follow procedures as outlined in the plans. These plans are to include and define what functions and operations are essential, how they will continue, human resources needed to support the functions and operations, and alternate locations or procedures that would be implemented in these instances. The department's COOP and any subsequent revisions should be disseminated to and discussed with all departmental employees to assist in expediting the plan in an actual situation. Department Heads are responsible for ensuring that a copy of their department's most current COOP is on file with the Department of County Administration.

A decision to activate a department's COOP plan, or the COOP plans for the entire County will depend on the circumstances of a potential or actual event. Should the need arise to activate a COOP, the Department Head should notify the County Administrator (or designee) as soon as possible.

Section III. —Notification to Staff and to the Public

County divisions and departments will utilize pre-determined departmental communication processes to notify all employees when there are extraordinary conditions or situations that impact them and/or their work place. The County Public Information Officer will be responsible for notifying local and regional media as quickly as possible.

Section IV. —Compensation

In the event that a division, department, and/or facility needs to be closed during normal work hours, please refer to appropriate bargaining unit contracts for compensation information. Employees not represented by a bargaining unit will follow the provisions established in the CSEA White Collar contract.