



USCG

**CIVILIAN HUMAN RESOURCES, DIVERSITY, AND
LEADERSHIP DIRECTORATE**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SHUTDOWN
FURLOUGH**

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This is a supplemental document to the Office of Personnel Management's questions and answers on furlough. This document should be used in conjunction with <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/guidance-for-shutdown-furloughs.pdf>

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A. General

- 1. What if I have a question during a furlough and my servicing HR team is not available? Is there an email that CG civilian employees can use during a furlough if they have human resources questions?**

A. Yes, emails can be sent to USCGOfficeofCivilianHR@uscg.mil.

- 2. Why are employees' personal emails and telephone numbers being requested by their supervisors?**

A. Supervisors may use this information to notify employees if they are furloughed. Supervisors typically must issue written notification and this written notification can be sent by e-mail. Supervisors or other management officials will also use the information to contact employees in the event a temporary recall during a furlough is necessary. Therefore, it is important the information employees provide before a furlough is implemented is valid throughout the duration of the furlough.

- 3. Has the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued information about shutdown furloughs?**

A. Yes, the following OPM website (<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/guidance-for-shutdown-furloughs.pdf>) provides guidance and additional questions and answers about shutdown furloughs. The discussion covers a variety of topics to include: general information, employee coverage, working during a furlough, leave and other time off, benefits, service credit, and federal employees on military duty, etc.

- 4. Where can an employee find specific Coast Guard guidance about preparing for a lapse in appropriation, contract management, travel, training, mission support, pay and leave guidance, public outreach, and operations management during a furlough?(Update)**

A. The Coast Guard communicates this information through ALCOASTs; email messages from the USCG Civilian Human Resources, Diversity, and Leadership Directorate; and WebTA specific guidance to supervisors of civilians.

The <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/budget/> website (under the active duty, reserve and military retired FAQ section) contains several questions and answers applicable to civilian employees.

- 5. How can an employee obtain their SF-50, recent pay stubs, or other documentation needed to file for unemployment compensation? (NEW)**

A. Employees may contact USCGOfficeofCivilianHR@uscg.mil to request a copy of their SF-50 or other documentation.

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Employees can download recent pay stubs from myEPP (employee personal page) at <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/EPPS/eplogin.aspx>. Employees who already have their non-Government email address stored, but are unable to generate their own EPP password reset (i.e., did not store security questions or forgot the answers) can contact the NFC Contact Center via telephone at 1-855-632-4468. NFC will process the password reset and send the system generated password reset email to the non-Government email stored in the profile.

Employees who do not have their non-Government email address stored in their EPP may contact USCGOfficeofCivilianHR@uscg.mil to request assistance and verification.

B. Employee Coverage

1. What does the designation as an excepted employee mean and does it have the same meaning as exempt employee for furlough purposes? What does the designation for non-exempt employee mean? (Updated)

A. DHS, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and USCG documents (i.e. Financial Resource Management Manual (FRMM) Chapter 6) use the terms “excepted” and “exempt” to describe personnel to be retained and missions to be continued during a lapse in appropriation.

- **Exempt** employees are not impacted by a lapse in appropriation (such as Yard, EC&R, Boating Safety funds, etc.) and are not issued a furlough notice. However, employees whose salaries are paid by fee funded accounts are impacted by the lapse in appropriations because salaries are paid through an account which lapsed (e.g., AFC-08).
- **Excepted** employees do not receive a furlough notice unless required for situational absences from work.
- **Non-exempt** employees are impacted by a lapse in appropriations and receive furlough notices.

C. Working During Furlough

1. Can a non-exempt employee request to change his/her regular day off (RDO) after the start of the pay period?

A. Alternative Work Schedules (AWS) will not be changed due to a potential lapse in appropriations unless there is a business need for doing so. See COMDTINST 5330.10, https://media.defense.gov/2017/Mar/14/2001716251/-1/-1/0/CI_5330_10.PDF for information regarding employee work schedules.

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2. Can an excepted employee take his/her RDO during a furlough?

A. AWS schedules will not be changed due to a potential lapse in appropriations unless there is a business need for doing so. See COMDTINST 5330.10, https://media.defense.gov/2017/Mar/14/2001716251/-1/-1/0/CI_5330_10.PDF for information regarding employee work schedules. An excepted employee working a compressed work schedule and who has an RDO after 22 December can continue to work his/her compressed work schedule and take the RDO.

D. Pay

1. Will employees be paid on time for pay period 25 (9 December through 22 December 2018)?

A. Civilian employees received pay on the electronic transfer date of 31 December 2018 for work performed during pay period 25 (9 December through 22 December).

2. How will exempt employees be paid during the furlough period? (Updated)

A. Employees who are exempt (e.g., paid from other than AFC-08 appropriations) are not affected by the lapse in appropriation. This category includes employees whose positions are NOT funded by annually appropriated funds (such as the Yard, ECC& R, Boating Safety funded employees etc.) Exempt employees will generally continue to be governed by the normal pay, leave, and other civil service rules and will be paid as normal.

Pay for employees who are exempt, but paid from AFC-08 appropriations (e.g., reimbursable positions), will be delayed until an appropriation or continuing resolution is passed.

3. How will furloughed non-exempt employees be paid during the furlough period?

A. Employees furloughed during the lapse in appropriations will be paid for pay period 26 as follows:

Employees in category “non-exempt” who report for orderly shutdown will be paid retroactively for time in a work status to perform shutdown activities on or after 22 December 2018 when a continuing resolution is passed or an appropriation is enacted. These employees will not be paid for time absent on furlough unless legislation is enacted that authorizes pay for non-work time during the furlough period.

4. How will excepted employees be paid during the furlough?

A. Pay for any hours worked on and after 22 December 2018 (the date the lapse in appropriation took effect) will be delayed until an appropriation or continuing resolution is passed.

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E. Leave and Other Time Off

1. Will employees accrue leave during a furlough? (Updated)

A. Leave will accrue as follows:

- **Exempt employees** (except those in reimbursable positions) will continue to accrue leave.
- **Excepted employees and exempt employees in reimbursable positions'** leave accruals will be calculated once the continuing resolution or appropriation is passed and T&As are submitted.
- **Non-Exempt (furloughed) employees'** leave accruals will be calculated once the continuing resolution or appropriation is passed and T&As are submitted. However, accruals may be impacted by periods of non-pay status unless legislation is enacted.

2. What is the status of an excepted employee who has to take situational (i.e. medical appointment, attend a funeral, etc.) or intermittent time off (i.e. previously approved time off for the holiday season) during the furlough?

A. In the event of a lapse of appropriation, all paid leave is canceled. Excepted employees cannot take paid leave (e.g., annual, sick leave, compensatory time off etc.) and cannot be placed in a leave without pay status (LWOP). Management officials can use workplace flexibilities (e.g., AWS, telework, etc.) in accordance with existing Coast Guard policy and labor management agreements. If these alternatives do not work, then the excepted employee absent from work will be in a furlough status during the absence and must be provided a written "situational" furlough notice (that includes a return to work date) by a management official in the chain of command. Excepted employees who do not report to work for any period of time during a furlough, will not be paid unless specific legislation authorizes retroactive pay for Federal employees.

3. An excepted employee was on annual leave and did not report back to work on or after 22 December 2018 when all paid leave was canceled due to the lapse in appropriation. What is the employee's status?

A. If the excepted employee did not report on or after 22 December 2018 as ordered, he/she may actually be in an absent-without-leave (AWOL) status. The supervisor should consult with CG-124. If the supervisor agreed to the absence, the employee will be in a furlough status and provided a "situational" furlough notice (that includes a return to work date) by a management official in the chain of command.

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4. An excepted/non-exempt employee has “use or lose” leave. Will the “use or lose” leave be restored? (NEW)

A. Although all paid leave was cancelled effective 22 December 2018, an excepted/non-exempt employee’s “use-or-lose” annual leave can be restored (due to exigency of public business) provided the leave was requested and approved by 24 November 2018. However, if the employee is requesting to use “restored annual leave” that is due to expire at the end of the leave year on 5 January 2019, the leave will be forfeited. Additional guidance on leave restoration requests will be provided by CG-12.

5. Is an excepted employee required to work on holidays (i.e. 24-25 December, 1 January, 21 January)? (Update)

A. Excepted employees are not required to work the holiday schedule unless they are “essential” and are normally required to work holidays. The normal rules governing pay for work on a holiday will apply once an appropriation or continuing resolution is enacted. Excepted employees, who are not required to work a holiday schedule, will be placed in a furlough status for the holidays (24-25 December, 1 January, 21 January).

6. I did not submit a timecard for PP26 (23 December 2018 – 5 January 2019) should I plan to submit a timecard for PP1 (January 6 - January 19, 2019)? (NEW)

A. Exempt employees paid through AFC-0 8 (e.g., reimbursable positions), excepted employees, and furloughed employees should **not** enter time and attendance information until directed to do so. Employees in exempt positions should submit timecards as usual.

7. Should I submit a timecard for upcoming pay periods if the furlough continues?

A. Exempt employees paid through AFC-0 8 (e.g., reimbursable positions), excepted employees, and furloughed employees should **not** enter time and attendance information until directed to do so. Employees in exempt positions should submit timecards as usual.

8. I have other questions about travel or work-life where can I find that information? (NEW)

A. Employees may consult the following website, <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/budget/>, for information. Several Q&As under the active duty, reserve and military section are applicable to the civilian workforce

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F. Benefits

Note: Check the information posted on the <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/budget/> web for further benefits or furlough updates.

**1. Is a non-exempt employee entitled to unemployment compensation during a lapse?
(Updated)**

A. It is possible a furloughed employee may become eligible for unemployment compensation. State unemployment compensation requirements differ. Some States require a 1-week waiting period before an individual qualifies for payments. In general, the law of the State in which an employee's last official duty station in Federal civilian service was located will determine eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. (See the Department of Labor website "Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees" at

<http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/unemcomp.asp>.)

An employee should submit questions to the appropriate State (or District of Columbia) office. The Department of Labor's website provides links to individual State offices at

<http://www.servicelocator.org/OWSLinks.asp>. The SF-8, "Notice to Federal Employee About Unemployment Insurance", can be obtained at <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/budget/>.

**2. Is an excepted employee entitled to unemployment compensation while on furlough?
(NEW)**

A. Excepted employees are not eligible for unemployment compensation during a shutdown. Excepted employees will receive compensation for time in a work status once a continuing resolution or appropriation is passed. Therefore, excepted employees' paychecks are considered delayed and employees are not eligible for unemployment compensation.

3. Will employees continue to be covered under the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) program during a shutdown furlough if the agency is unable to make its premium payments on time?

A. Yes, employees' FEHB coverage will continue even if an agency does not make the premium payments on time. Since employees will be in a non-pay status, the enrollees' share of the FEHB premium will accumulate and be withheld from pay upon return to pay status.

4. What happens to an employee's Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS) coverage if furloughed?

A. Payroll deductions will cease for an employee that does not receive sufficient pay to cover the deduction for that pay period. An employee will remain enrolled in FSAFEDS, but eligible health care claims incurred during a period for which no payroll allotment was made will not be

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reimbursed until the employee returns to a pay status and the allotment is successfully restarted. The remaining balance due is recalculated over the remaining pay periods to match the participant's election amount.

Eligible dependent care expenses incurred during a non-pay status may be reimbursed up to whatever balance is in the employee's dependent care account—as long as the expense incurred during the non-pay status allows the employee (or spouse if married) to work, look for work or attend school full-time.

5. What happens to an employee's Federal Long Term Care (FLTCIP) Program coverage if furloughed?

A. Payroll deductions will cease for any employee that does not receive sufficient pay to cover the deduction for that pay period. If Long Term Care Partners does not receive payment for three consecutive pay periods, they will begin to bill the enrollee. The enrollee should pay premiums directly billed to him/her on a timely basis to ensure continuation of coverage. Coverage will continue as long as premiums are paid.

6. What happens to an employee's Federal Dental and Vision (FEDVIP) Program coverage if furloughed?

A. Payroll deductions will cease for any employee that does not receive sufficient pay to cover the deductions for that pay period. BENEFEDS will generate a bill to an enrollee for premiums when no payment is received for two consecutive pay periods. The enrollee should pay premiums directly billed to him/her on a timely basis to ensure continuation of coverage.

7. What is the effect of a shutdown furlough on Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions, investments, and loans? (Update)

A. Payroll deductions will cease for any employee that does not receive sufficient pay to cover the deduction for that pay period. Interest will continue to accrue on all TSP accounts. If an employee has a TSP loan, he/she may be able to reamortize, or adjust the loan for the length of time of the loan. An employee may do so if the loan is not already at the maximum term limit — 5 years for a general purpose loan and 15 years for a residential loan.

Per the www.TSP.gov website (December 22, 2018), the TSP will continue its normal daily operations during the Federal government shutdown. Normally the TSP requires documentation from the agency to suspend or defer TSP loan payments. However, considering the circumstances, the TSP is not requiring documentation of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status at this time. If loan payments were up to date prior to the furlough, missing one or two payments will not cause a loan to be in default. As long as retroactive pay is approved, all missed loan payments will be submitted and posted. The TSP will provide more information as the furlough continues or events change.

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8. I submitted a change to my health benefits during the Open Season. Was the change effective January 2019? (NEW)

A. Enrollments and enrollment changes made during the Federal Benefits Open Season were processed for the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS).

Operations under FEHB, FEDVIP and FSAFEDS will continue.

9. I had a qualifying life changing event (i.e., birth of a child, etc.) that occurred during the shutdown. How do I submit a SF-2809 and when will it be processed? (NEW)

A. Generally, FEHB changes will not be processed until the shutdown ends. When normal operations resume, employees should submit a completed SF 2809 to their servicing HR Specialist. These elections will be processed retroactively. If out of pocket expenses are incurred because of this lapse, employees can submit claims for reimbursement to their FEHB carrier. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Walt Misiorek at Walter.J.Misiorek@uscg.mil.

10. How will being in a furlough status (i.e., non-pay status) for more than 30 days impact federal benefits and programs (i.e. within-grade increase, time- in-grade, etc.)? (NEW)

A. For information regarding the impact of non-pay status to federal benefits and programs, see <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/effect-of-extended-leave-without-pay-lwop-or-other-nonpay-status-on-federal-benefits-and-programs/> or email USCGOfficeofCivilianHR@uscg.mil.

G. Return to Work

1. How will employees know if/when to return to work?

A. Employees should monitor announcements on the webpage, www.dcms.uscg.mil/civilianhr, the public broadcast, or the USCG number **202-372-4300** for updates about returning to duty. In some cases, supervisors may contact their employees via telephone and/or email to recall them to work during the furlough, therefore, employees must monitor the telephone numbers or email provided to their supervisors on a daily basis. The Alert and Warning System may also be used as a means to notify personnel of updates posted on the webpage.

In the event of a temporary recall (i.e. natural disaster, emergency project), employees must be available to work the next business day after supervisory contact.

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- 2. If a non-exempt employee, who is recalled to work during the furlough is unable to report for duty, must he/she take leave?**

A. If the employee did not report as ordered, he/she may actually be in an absent-without-leave (AWOL) status. The supervisor should consult with CG-124. If the supervisor agreed to the absence, the employee will remain in a furlough status until he/she reports in for work.

- 3. In the event an appropriation or continuing resolution is passed and an employee does not resume his/her normal work schedule (i.e. report to work the next scheduled workday) will he/she be charged leave?**

A. An employee must take leave if he or she is unable to report as ordered or he/she may actually be in an absent-without-leave (AWOL) status. The supervisor should consult with CG-124. All leave must be approved by the employee's supervisor following normal leave requesting procedures.

- 4. During the shutdown of FY 2014, some Coast Guard employees were recalled under the Pay Our Military Act (POMA). Will employees be required to return to work under POMA in FY 2019?**

A. The authorization for the 2014 POMA has since expired and, at this time, there is no similar POMA authorization allowing for the recall of civilians.