

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
SHUTDOWN IN THE ABSENCE OF APPROPRIATION**

This document describes the plan for shutdown of agency activities in the event of late appropriations or other similar situations requiring the discharge of all employees except those conducting essential activities.

Actions

The Office of Communications (OC) has two Category III excepted employees who will be funded when appropriations are made available - the Director of the Office of Communications and the Deputy Director for Press Operations. In the event of a shutdown, the Director or the Deputy Director will be available to provide communications assistance to the Secretary.

OC has 67 total employees: 40 funded by appropriations and 27 funded through the Working Capital Fund. 65 employees are not excepted and will be asked to come to work for at least the first half day. After this, only the excepted employees will report.

On the first day, all employees will be directed to report to their supervisors to receive assignments of duties or other pertinent information for an orderly shutdown. For those teleworking, "reporting" maybe be done by telephone.

The voice mail message on the OC main contact number for reporters will be changed to reflect the shutdown.

Employees' auto reply email will be updated and employees will also change their voice mail messages to reflect the shutdown.

Unless otherwise directed by OMB, the USDA.gov website will remain live with supporting resources or in a cached state. This means the site will not be updated during the shutdown, but will allow for full access to USDA.gov pages and resources in a frozen state of the last operational day before the shutdown. USDA websites granted as 'excepted' will continue normal operations. This disposition will be communicated to all agency heads, web masters, and public affairs directors.

Any OC staff on travel will be notified to return prior to the lapse in appropriations.

All records, personal property, real property, and facilities will be maintained and protected by those entities charged with security for the Jamie L. Whitten and South buildings until such time as funds are appropriated.

When it is determined that an employee is no longer needed to perform activities to accomplish the orderly shutdown, the employee(s) will be notified and placed on furlough or other personnel action as appropriate.

As employees are about to be released, the employee should enter their time for the pay period up to the time of their release in the WebTA system.

Other instructions and specific guidance will be issued as circumstances require at each occurrence of a potential shutdown situation.

Throughout this period, the Director will evaluate the need for continued attendance by these two employees. All other employees will continue on furlough, except as provided below:

- The Director will continually evaluate the need to bring staff out of furloughed status based on the needs of the office to conduct excepted activities. Employees brought out of furloughed status for excepted activities will be returned to furlough status when the need for the excepted activity ceases.

Program Impact

Press releases will not be generated as normal, nor will there be regular USDA contact with the media. Therefore, the media will not have access to USDA data, information, and/or personnel. Information on USDA policies and programs will not be available to the public.

Timely updates to the website will stop, thus valuable agricultural reports and materials will not be available to agricultural economic community, and the agriculture and consumer publics. Hosting and support of the website platform supporting USDA.GOV and a dozen more USDA agency and program websites would be at risk in a cached state.

Visual production, printing and editing of USDA documents will stop. Television and radio transmission will also be stopped.

Requests for information and publications that provide advice and assistance to the public will not be processed.

Direct and sustained public and media contact with organizations, groups and individuals will cease. This will prevent this office from providing responses to requests for clarification and information on national agricultural policies and programs that ultimately impact on the agricultural economy and general well-being of the nation.

The following is a partial list of services that will not be provided in the event of a shutdown:

- a) USDA reports
- b) Policy guidance and direction on public affairs issues and programs
- c) Teleconferencing and video production
- d) Design services
- e) Photographic Services
- f) Radio and television transmissions
- g) Printing Services
- h) Publications and information distribution