



FURLOUGHED EMPLOYEES HANDBOOK

U.S. Department of State

Updated January 16, 2019

Contents

When Will I Be Paid?	3
Q. If the shutdown furlough lasts more than 30 days, will that cause a Reduction in Force (RIF)?	3
Copies of Furlough Notifications.....	3
Q. I have no access to my state.gov email account. Can I receive a copy of the furlough notification through my personal email account?	3
Financial Assistance.....	4
Department Letter to Creditors	4
Unemployment Compensation.....	4
Q. Are employees entitled to unemployment compensation during the furlough?.....	4
Q. May I look for a job during the furlough if that is required to apply for unemployment compensation in my State?.....	5
Q. What is my Duty Station?	6
Allowances.....	7
Q. What happens to allowances during the furlough period?	7
Benefits Paid Through Payroll Deductions.....	8
Q. What effect does the furlough have on other benefits?	8
Payroll Allotments	8
Q. What effect does the furlough have on payroll allotments?.....	8
Federal Employee Health Benefits and Life Insurance	8
Q. Will I still have coverage under the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) program during the furlough?	8
Q. What if I have a Qualifying Life Event during the furlough?.....	8
Change in Health Care Plan.....	9
Q. I changed my health care plan during open season. Will my new health insurance take effect as expected during the furlough?	9
Injury While on Furlough or LWOP.....	9
Q. If employees are injured while on furlough or LWOP, are they eligible for workers' compensation?.....	9
Thrift Savings Plan	9
Q. What is the effect of a shutdown furlough on Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions, investments, and loans?.....	9
TSP Loan	9

Q. Can an employee obtain a loan from his/her TSP account based on anticipated financial hardship resulting from the furlough?	9
TSP Contributions.....	10
Q. Can I make contributions to my TSP account while I am in non-pay status (i.e., furlough)?	10
FERS	10
Q. If I am a FERS participant, will I receive Department of State’s automatic (1%) and matching contributions to my TSP account while I am in non-pay status?	10
Further Benefits Questions	10
Q. What if I have further questions on specific benefits (FLTCIP, FSAFEDS, FEDVIP, etc.)?	10
Q. Will the Transit Subsidy Program (TRANServ) continue during the shutdown?.....	10
Leave.....	10
Q. I’m non-excepted. What happens to my annual and sick leave?.....	10
Q. I’m excepted. What happens to my annual and sick leave?.....	11
Q. What if I had use-or-lose leave at the end of 2018?.....	11
Retirement.....	11
Q. What effect does the furlough have on my retirement deductions?	11
Q. I applied to retire in January. Will my retirement still be processed?.....	11
Q. Will I receive my January FS annuity payment in early February, as expected?	12
Taxes.....	12
Q. Will I receive a W-2 for 2018?.....	12
Mental Health Resources	12
WorkLife4You.....	12
Emergency Visitation Travel/Elder Care.....	13
Medical Evacuations.....	13
Mandatory Distance Learning.....	13
Q. I have to take mandatory Distance Learning Training before a certain deadline. Will there be an extension to the deadline?.....	13
FSI Training	13
Long-Term Training (War College and National Defense University).....	14

Note: HR/ER staff compiled this document to provide furloughed State Department employees with links to useful resources. It is not legal advice. We hope that you will find it helpful.

When Will I Be Paid?

The Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services (CGFS) processed payroll for pay period 26 on January 15, 2019, for those individuals (both direct-hire employees and LE staff) who are funded using no-year or multi-year accounts that have residual balances. CGFS issued T&A guidance for bureaus and posts for reporting time during any periods of lapse for pay period 26 and any later pay periods.

Furloughed, excepted, and intermittent excepted employees who are not funded will not receive another paycheck until there is legislation to permit payment.

Employees who are “exempt” from the lapse in appropriations (e.g., because they are not paid from annually appropriated funds) are not impacted, and will receive their pay on January 17, 2019. Given the lapse in appropriations, the date of the deposit or funds availability reflected by your bank may not be the same as it has been, but pay period 26 pay for those employees operating under the Chapter One guidance will be in accounts by the Department’s official pay day of January 17, 2019.

Foreign Service annuitants should receive their January 2019 annuity payments in early February, on time.

Q. If the shutdown furlough lasts more than 30 days, will that cause a Reduction in Force (RIF)?

A. No. OPM guidance specifically states that reductions in force (RIF) furlough regulations and SES competitive furlough requirements are not applicable to emergency shutdown furloughs because the ultimate duration of an emergency shutdown furlough is unknown at the outset and is dependent entirely on Congressional action, rather than agency action. See section P, 5A of the [OPM Guidance for Shutdown Furloughs](#) for more information.

Copies of Furlough Notifications

Q. I have no access to my state.gov email account. Can I receive a copy of the furlough notification through my personal email account?

A. Yes. To request a copy of your furlough notification you can send an email to CopyofFurloughLetter@state.gov. You must include the following information:

- Full name of employee

- Employee's bureau
- Type of Service – Civil or Foreign
- Personal email address
- State.gov email address

Financial Assistance

You may want to contact your financial institution to determine whether it is one of the many offering assistance to federal employees during the shutdown. If it is not, you may also conduct an internet search to identify financial institutions providing assistance to federal employees.

Department Letter to Creditors

The Deputy Undersecretary for Management has signed an explanatory letter to creditors for use by Department employees. It can be downloaded from:

<https://www.state.gov/m/dghr/releases/index.htm>.

Unemployment Compensation

Q. Are employees entitled to unemployment compensation during the furlough?

A. See the Department of Labor website "Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees" at <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/UnemploymentBenefits/unemployment-benefits.aspx>. Furloughed employees (non-excepted) are eligible for unemployment compensation. Excepted employees working on a full-time basis are generally not eligible. State unemployment compensation requirements differ. Some States require a one-week waiting period before an individual qualifies for payments. Agencies or employees should submit questions to the appropriate State or District of Columbia office.

In general, the law of the state in which an employee's last official duty station in Federal civilian service was located will be the law that determines eligibility for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. The States and the District of Columbia determine the eligibility for benefits and the amounts to be paid to unemployed individuals.

Generally, a furloughed employee may file a claim with the state of their duty station or Washington, D.C., if their duty station is Washington, D.C. Employees with an overseas duty station should file in their state of residency or Washington, D.C., if their residence is Washington, D.C.

All U.S. states accept applications for unemployment insurance via phone or website. No state requires in-person application. Additionally, OPM informed the Department that Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia have agreed that non-excepted employees who are filing

for unemployment are **not** subject to the requirement to look for work in order to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits.

If you are filing for DC unemployment benefits, you may file over the phone by calling the Customer Navigation Center at 1-877-319-7346 or (202) 478-5937 Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm or online at www.dcnetworks.org. The American Job Center Headquarters location will be open from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm for computer access in order to file a claim online, to answer any unemployment insurance inquiries, and for you to provide your required wage documentation.

If Congress authorizes retroactive pay after the furlough ends, employees will be required to pay back unemployment compensation to the State or Washington, D.C.

Q. May I look for a job during the furlough if that is required to apply for unemployment compensation in my State?

A. A furloughed employee may seek employment without advanced authorization and can provide to the unemployment office any evidence that he or she is in fact seeking employment. Some States require claimants be engaged in an active search for work to be eligible for unemployment compensation. Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia have agreed that non-excepted employees who are filing for unemployment are **not** subject to the requirement to look for work in order to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits.

Department employees are reminded that relevant ethics laws, rules, and regulations continue to apply to them while in furlough status, including restrictions on outside employment with non-federal entities. For example, Department employees employed by a non-Federal entity during the furlough may later be restricted from participating in their official capacity in matters that affect that entity. If you have specific questions about your potential employment, you can contact EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov.

For presidential appointees and covered noncareer employees (e.g., both noncareer SES and SFS and certain Schedule C employees), there are certain restrictions on outside earned income. Employees who file a Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 278e) must also file a recusal notice at negotiationnotice@state.gov when negotiating outside employment.

If you have more specific questions not covered above, you can contact EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov.

To assist your State with processing your claim, you may need to provide one or more of the following. Check the specific State requirements to gather the documentation you need.

- Earnings & Leave Statements (ELS) for the past 12 months (available on [Employee Express](#))

- If you cannot log into Employee Express, email payhelp@state.gov or call 1-877-865-0760 for assistance.
- Official Name and Address of Employing Federal Agency (U.S. Department of State, 2201 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20520)
- Official Name and Address of Component or Employing Department, if different
- A copy of your most recent SF-50 or equivalent form
 - If you don't have a copy of your most recent SF-50, submit your unemployment application to the State or D.C. unemployment office with a completed copy of the SF-5113 you received with your furlough notice; the unemployment office will review and send a request for the SF-50 and payroll information to the Department.
- Federal Agency's Identification Code (FIC) (DOS = 405)
- Your Last Official Duty Station

Q. What is my Duty Station?

A. OPM has provided the following guidance on determining your duty station:

- Duty station is the city/town, county, and State in which the employee works. For most employees, this will be the location of the employee's work site.
- Work site of the employee is the place where he or she works, or at which the employee's activities are based, as determined by the employing agency.

Determining Location of Work Site:

- The location of an employee's work site is the location of the employee's desk or the place where the employee normally performs his or her duties.
- For those employees with no fixed work site, the duty station will be determined by the employing agency. For example, the duty station of an investigator who works in the field may be the location of the office from which assignments are normally made. For an inspector, whose agency may require him or her to be on-site at many places, it may be his or her home.
- Agencies will also designate the duty stations of employees who work at installations, such as military bases, whose boundaries cross county or state lines.

Please keep in mind that the process to apply for unemployment insurance varies from state to state. The intent of this checklist is to provide a baseline of documentation that might assist you in completing an application.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has provided the additional UI guidance below for employees and agencies.

Unemployment Insurance Information for Federal Workers

- [Unemployment Insurance Questions and Answers for Federal Workers \(December 2018\)](#)

- [Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees Fact Sheet \(December 2018\)](#)
- [Quick Reference Table of State Unemployment Insurance Laws](#)
- [Map of State Unemployment Insurance Websites](#)
- [Federal Identification Code \(FIC\) Chart \(December 2018\)](#)
- [Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees Webpage](#)

Allowances

Q. What happens to allowances during the furlough period?

A. Personnel whose positions are funded from accounts with residual balances will continue to receive all allowances they would receive under normal circumstances.

The following allowances will continue for all employees ordinarily eligible to receive such allowances, regardless of whether the position is funded from residual balances, is excepted or non-excepted:

- Housing and utilities abroad;
- Living Quarters Allowances;
- Post allowance (COLA);
- Home Service Transfer Allowance;
- Foreign Transfer Allowance;
- Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance (TQSA);
- Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA);
- Subsistence Expense Allowance (in the event of an evacuation); and
- Extraordinary Quarters Allowance.

Allowances for persons in excepted positions will continue, except for the Representational Allowance, which will be suspended during the lapse.

For persons in non-excepted positions, the following allowances will not be paid during a furlough:

- Post Differential;
- Danger Pay (all or nearly all positions at danger pay posts would be excepted); and
- Representation Allowance.

The following allowances, regardless of whether the person is in an excepted or non-excepted position, may be provided up through February 28, 2019, if Post has sufficient residual balances to cover expenses:

- Education Allowance;
- Educational Travel; and

- Travel for children of separated families.

Benefits Paid Through Payroll Deductions

Q. What effect does the furlough have on other benefits?

A. The effect of a furlough on benefits that are paid for through payroll deductions varies. For additional information, see OPM's fact sheet on the "Effect of Extended Leave Without Pay (or Other Nonpay Status) on Federal Benefits and Programs" at http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/LWOP_eff.asp.

Payroll Allotments

Q. What effect does the furlough have on payroll allotments?

A. Any required withholdings (i.e., Federal and State taxes and Social Security) are based upon a percentage of actual earnings. Therefore, if an employee is furloughed, his or her withholdings would be reduced in turn. The employee's specific allotments would not change (e.g., credit union loans and others), unless the employee completes a new allotment request increasing or decreasing the amount withheld. Allotments can't be made if you're not receiving pay, so you may want to review your allotments to determine whether you'll need to make alternative arrangements (e.g., if you're using allotments to pay loans, alimony, etc.).

Federal Employee Health Benefits and Life Insurance

Q. Will I still have coverage under the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) program during the furlough?

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

For Federal Employee Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), coverage continues for 12 consecutive months in a non-pay status without cost to the employee (5 CFR 870.508(a)) or to the agency (5 CFR 870.404(c)). Please note that premium payments are required if an enrolled employee in non-pay status is receiving workers' compensation (5 CFR 870.508(a)).

Q. What if I have a Qualifying Life Event during the furlough?

A. Generally, new enrollments or changes in enrollment due to a Qualifying Life Event do not take effect until the employee has been back in pay status for any part of the prior pay period.

The exception is for a new enrollment or change in enrollment due to the birth or addition of a child, which is effective on the first day of the pay period in which the child is born or becomes an eligible family member. There is no requirement to be in pay status in order for an enrollment or change in enrollment due to birth or addition of a child to become effective.

Change in Health Care Plan

Q. I changed my health care plan during open season. Will my new health insurance take effect as expected during the furlough?

A. It depends on whether your application was processed before the furlough. If you've received a new ID card, your enrollment was processed. See section H in OPM's furlough guidance for specifics here: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/guidance-for-shutdown-furloughs.pdf>. You may also check with your new carrier to confirm your new enrollment.

Injury While on Furlough or LWOP

Q. If employees are injured while on furlough or LWOP, are they eligible for workers' compensation?

A. No, workers' compensation is paid to employees only if they are injured while performing their duties. Employees on furlough or LWOP are not in a duty status.

Thrift Savings Plan

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

A. Employees should refer to the [TSP website](#) for [furlough guidance](#).

TSP Loan

Q. Can an employee obtain a loan from his/her TSP account based on anticipated financial hardship resulting from the furlough?

A. Employees should refer to the [TSP fact sheet](#) on the [TSP website](#).

TSP Contributions

Q. Can I make contributions to my TSP account while I am in non-pay status (i.e., furlough)?

A. No. Because employee contributions to TSP accounts must be made as deductions from payroll, you cannot contribute to your TSP account while you are in non-pay status for one or more full pay periods.

FERS

Q. If I am a FERS participant, will I receive Department of State's automatic (1%) and matching contributions to my TSP account while I am in non-pay status?

A. No. Agency automatic (1%) contributions are calculated on basic pay earned during each pay period, and Agency matching contributions are calculated based on employee contributions from that basic pay. Therefore, if you are in non-pay status and do not earn basic pay for a particular pay period, you will not receive either type of Agency contribution for that pay period. These contributions are lost unless Congress takes action to restore pay.

Further Benefits Questions

Q. What if I have further questions on specific benefits (FLTCIP, FSAFEDS, FEDVIP, etc.)?

A. - Please see Section H (page 18) in OPM's [Guidance for Shutdown Furloughs](#).

Q. Will the Transit Subsidy Program (TRANServ) continue during the shutdown?

A. Yes, for Department of State employees, the TRANServ program will continue to support those personnel required to work during the shutdown; funding is available through March at this point. Distribution of Transit cards is on hold until the lapse in appropriations is resolved.

Transit cards should not be used by employees who are furloughed.

Leave

Q. I'm non-excepted. What happens to my annual and sick leave?

A. You won't accrue annual and sick leave during the furlough once you've been in a non-pay status for 80 hours (for employees with a regular 80-hour biweekly tour of duty). Congress has passed language that would authorize pay for the period of the lapse in appropriations, and the legislation is awaiting Presidential signature. If enacted, we expect such employees' leave accounts to be recredited for any lost accrual of annual and sick leave due to being in a non-pay status.

Q. I'm excepted. What happens to my annual and sick leave?

A. You will continue to accrue leave, but accrued leave will not be available for use until funding is provided.

Q. What if I had use-or-lose leave at the end of 2018?

A: OPM guidance mandates the restoration of use-or-lose leave for employees who properly scheduled the use-or-lose leave but were unable to use some or all of the leave because of the shutdown furlough. This applies to both excepted and non-excepted employees. In order for employees to restore the leave after the shutdown ends, the following conditions apply:

- The employee must have requested the leave in writing no later than November 24, 2018; and
- The leave was approved by the supervisor and subsequently cancelled.

The Department will provide further specific guidance on the submission of requests to restore leave after the partial shutdown ends.

Retirement

Q. What effect does the furlough have on my retirement deductions?

A. No retirement deductions will be made if you're not receiving pay. Generally, a period of non-pay status will have no effect on your retirement-creditable service or high-3 average pay unless the non-pay status is for more than six months during the calendar year.

Q. I applied to retire in January. Will my retirement still be processed?

A. OPM's Retirement Services office is not directly impacted by the lapse in funding. Civil Service retirement applications are being processed and Customer Service Specialists are answering calls at its call center.

Foreign Service Retirement applications are processed and adjudicated by HR/RET. Applications for employees retiring in January are being prioritized, but the office is short-staffed during the furlough.

Staff may continue to retire during the lapse and the retirement date will be the actual date the employee chose to retire, not the date the government re-opens. Retirement applications should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the requested retirement date. New retirement packages for those who request a retirement date will be processed retroactive to the selected retirement date. However, FS annuity payments may be delayed as a result of the shutdown.

All SF-50s for December 2018 retirements have been processed.

Q. Will I receive my January FS annuity payment in early February, as expected?

A. Yes.

Taxes

Q. Will I receive a W-2 for 2018?

A. Yes. The Department will process W-2s and 1099 forms during the furlough, and can recall employees to perform the necessary work. After they're processed, you will be able to download your W-2 and 1099 through [Employee Express](#).

Mental Health Resources

MED's Employee Consultation Services (ECS) office remains open with reduced staffing during the furlough. You can reach ECS at 703-812-2257 or email MEDECS@state.gov

WorkLife4You

[WorkLife4You](#) (WL4Y) is a comprehensive and confidential resource and referral for employees. WL4Y specialists are accessible 24/7 by phone (1-866-552-4748) and [online](#) to provide expert guidance and referrals for a wide variety of services to help employees balance the demands of their professional and personal lives. Employees can view the services by logging into the website, <http://www.worklife4you.com/>, with the Screen name: statedepartment and Password: infoquest. Employees will need to register individually to use the services.

Emergency Visitation Travel/Elder Care

Emergency Visitation Travel (EVT) requires approval from post leadership, and in the cases of Medical EVT or Elder Care EVT, approval from MED or HR/ER, respectively. At posts, Deputy Chiefs of Mission (DCMs) are the approving authority for mission personnel, and Chiefs of Mission (COMs) may approve the DCM's travel. Please refer to [3 FAM 3740](#) for additional details. Some limitations on EVT will apply during the lapse in appropriations. For EVT questions during the lapse, post Human Resources or Management Officers should contact HR Employee Relations Office Director, Lynne Skeirik.

Medical Evacuations

New medical evacuations and ongoing medevacs are considered excepted activities and will continue during the furlough.

Mandatory Distance Learning

Q. I have to take mandatory Distance Learning Training before a certain deadline. Will there be an extension to the deadline?

A. Yes. If you are a non-excepted employee, all required training should be completed as soon as possible after the furlough is lifted. The mandatory annual ethics training (PA454) should be completed by financial disclosure reports filers within seven (7) business days after the furlough has ended.

FSI Training

In accordance with the shutdown plan, Foreign Service Institute (FSI), FSI field offices, and all other domestic facilities will be closed, except those portions of the Diplomatic Security Training Center and FSI's National Foreign Affairs Training Center campus housing employees performing excepted functions. Crisis Management Training and Antiterrorism Assistance Training that has already started at posts abroad may continue if posts are open, subject to the approval of the Chief of Mission, if the training pertains to the safety and security of personnel.

Domestically, the following courses will continue as scheduled since they pertain to the safety and security of personnel going to Afghanistan, Iraq and other posts of heightened danger: Afghanistan Familiarization (RS415); Iraq Familiarization (FT610); for those deploying to posts where it is mandatory, the Diplomatic Security Training Foreign Affairs Counter Threat Course (CT650); and Green Team Training and In-Service Training for Mobile Security and the High Threat Operations Course for Agents going to High Threat Environments.

Long-Term Training (War College and National Defense University)

Department of State employees (faculty and students) on detail to the National Defense University and the War Colleges who are conducting training or participating in training do not occupy positions that meet the definition of 'excepted.' During a lapse in appropriations, these employees must be furloughed.