

## Closing, Suspension, or Modification of County Operations on an Emergency Basis

<b>Objective:</b>	To establish policy for suspending or modifying County functions or operations, and/or closing County 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.	<b>Policy/Procedure Number:</b>	01-42
		<b>Effective Date:</b>	November 21, 1995
		<b>Responsible Department:</b>	County Administration
<b>Reference:</b> <i>(All Applicable Federal, State and Local Laws)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYS Executive Laws, Article 2-B, Sections 23-25, 27, 29-b</li> <li>• NY General Municipal Laws, Article 10, Section 209-F</li> <li>• NY Civil Service Laws, Article 5, Section 82-b</li> <li>• Tompkins County Legislature, "Approval of Designation of Successors" resolution, which is revised and adopted at the beginning of each operating year.</li> <li>• Collective Bargaining Agreements in Tompkins County</li> </ul>	<b>Modified Date (s):</b>	November 2009; May 7, 2019
		<b>Resolution No.:</b>	10-27; 2019-100
		<b>Next Scheduled Review:</b>	May 2024

**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.

**General Information:** 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 department, multiple departments, all 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.

**I. 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.

**Epidemic** - A widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.

**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).

**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.

**Pandemic** - A widespread occurrence of an infectious disease over a whole country or world at a particular time.

## **II. Policy:**

- A.** County operations will remain open unless a situation arises and/or in the event of inclement weather that would pose an immediate life, health, or safety risk to County employees and/or the public.
- B.** The County Administrator shall have the sole authority to formally suspend, modify, and/or close County operations.
- C.** The decision to suspend, modify, and/or close County operations may need to be coordinated with the Chair of the Legislature and authorized public safety officials, and if required, authorized Highway and Information Technology services personnel.
- D.** In the absence of official notification of a delayed opening or office closure in the event of inclement weather or emergency, County employees are expected to report to work for their scheduled shift or contact their Department Head and/or Supervisor.
- E.** Department Heads are responsible for determining the appropriate method of communicating suspension, modification, and/or closures that affect only their department. It may be deemed necessary for essential employees to report during extraordinary situations as determined by their Department Head or their designee.
- F.** Every County department will maintain an updated Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and ensure a copy is on file with County Administration.
- G.** Unless excused from duty by action of the County Administrator or Department Head as described below, County employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to maintain regular work schedules.

## **III. Procedure:**

### **A. Emergency Closing Considerations**

The following list contains the most common scenarios when closing considerations would apply, what processes would be followed, and guidance for managing other situations not specifically referenced.

#### *1. Inclement Weather*

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, Highway Director, 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, employees, and the public, and to allow for a delayed opening or orderly closure.

#### *2. 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 (the City of Ithaca Chief of Police for roads within the Ithaca city limits, and the Tompkins County Sheriff for roads outside of the City of Ithaca).

When the decision is made to close all roads in the County, all non-public safety County 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 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.

### 3. *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 department in that facility to another location.

The relevant Department Head(s) or their designee will notify the impacted employees as soon as a decision is made that alters normal work processes and locations.

### 4. *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 harm's 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 immediately notify emergency response officials.

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.

### 5. *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 Commissioner and/or 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.

## **B. Continuity of Operations Plan**

1. Each 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.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Department Heads are responsible for ensuring that the plan is updated as needed and a copy of their department's most current COOP is on file with the Department of County Administration.
5. 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.

### **C. Notification to Staff and to the Public**

1. The County Administrator is responsible for notifying Department Heads of the affected department(s) in the event there is a suspension, modification, or closure of any or all County operations.
2. County departments will utilize pre-determined departmental communication processes for Department Heads or their designees to notify all employees when there are extraordinary conditions or situations that impact them and/or their workplace.
3. If safe to do so, notice must be posted on the entrances of affected facilities.
4. The County Public Information Officer will be responsible for notifying local and regional media as quickly as possible. Notice will also be posted on the Tompkins County website.
5. It is the responsibility of each Department Head to be certain their employees are made aware of and receive a copy of this policy and that each employee understands their responsibilities during emergency situations.

### **D. Compensation**

1. In the event that a 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.