

April 8, 2011

RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS (REE) SHUTDOWN ACTION PLAN

Following is the action plan for the orderly termination of work in the absence of an appropriation for the:

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
Economic Research Service (ERS)
National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Prior to Enactment of Appropriations for Balance of Fiscal Year 2011

1. REE “excepted” categories of activities necessary for the continuation of Agency activities:
 - Law enforcement, health and safety for the security of facilities at BARC
 - Support the IT systems and equipment funded from available funds at NIFA.
 - Conducting essential activities to the extent that they protect life and property including:
 - The care and maintenance of all animals and animal germplasm on experiments or scheduled to be used in experiments or for which research data are being collected.
 - The care and maintenance of all plants and plant germplasm being used in experiments or scheduled to be used in experiments or for which research data are being collected.
 - The security, care, and maintenance of all plant and animal germplasm collections, microbial, insect and plant taxonomic collections (clonal) repositories, disease free stocks, virus, bacterial and other materials used for research purposes.
 - The continued collection of research data related to precipitation and watershed experiments.
 - The maintenance of the facilities housing the above research materials including the necessary heat, light, power, refrigeration and supporting mechanical and equipment systems.
 - The continuation of essential support service and supplies from cooperators and contractors under cooperative agreements, services and supply contracts, purchase orders and commercial purchase cards limited only to those services and supplies, including parts, essential to protect the above described research property. Any equipment purchases must be directly related to the impending loss of research property.

Excepted employees will be ordered to continue work to assure the protection and safety of life and property.

2. After notification that a shutdown is possible, or if a shutdown appears imminent, REE will identify activities associated with and employees required to complete orderly shutdown:

- Managers and supervisors should begin to identify those functions that need to be performed which are associated with an orderly shutdown of normal activities. Such functions may include, but are not limited to:
 - Taking measures to secure files;
 - Making contacts outside the Agency that are necessary to communicate our status;
 - Cancelling meetings and other previously arranged Agency business;
 - Documenting the status of specially funded projects with Agency cooperatives; i.e., cooperative/research support agreements.
- Managers and supervisors should begin to identify those **employees** whose presence at work will be required to perform the functions associated with the orderly shutdown of Agency activities, as outlined above. Such identifications should be based on:
 - Only those employees who are necessary for the orderly termination of activity;
 - Only that number of such employees as required to perform the tasks, keeping in mind the need for both professional judgment to be applied, as well as support staff services required;
 - The best supervisory judgment regarding the specific individuals necessary to continue essential work.
 - Provide access to the site for contractors and be available to respond to related inquiries.
- The Human Resources Division will hold the final excepted employee list for T&A purposes.
- Complete the matrix template shown in Appendix A and submit to the Office of Budget and Program Analysis when requested.
- Daily reports on the status of the activities undertaken for shutdown will be provided by the Assistant Deputy Administrator, Administrative and Financial Management, to the Administrators, then to the REE Under Secretary, then to the Office of the Secretary.

Following are actions to be completed by Administrative and Financial Management Divisions:

1. Human Resources Division Actions:

- Issue Q&A's on furlough to all employees, bargaining units, and partnership councils.
- Issue guidance and instructional materials to all employees related to policy issues (e.g., T&A's, maxiflex, notification of volunteers, etc.).
- Issue guidance to REE agencies on the steps in the "orderly shutdown" of operations in accordance with Departmental guidance.
- Prepare, review, and approve individual furlough notices (if required).

2. Financial Management Division Actions:

- Advise employees not to plan official travel beyond the official furlough date. Travel should be planned to terminate on or before the official furlough date or after the furlough is lifted.
- Advise employees that travel planned on or after the furlough date should not commence in the event of a shutdown. Travel orders issued would be considered invalid.
- Advise passport custodians to retrieve all passports held by employees and secure them in the custodian's safe.
- Advise employees to secure all hard copy tickets for travel during the period of lapsed appropriation.
- Advise employees that all Government issued credit cards (e.g., USBank Travel Card, Purchase Cards, Fleet Cards, FTS Telephone Calling Cards, etc.) should be in the possession of the individual card holder or stored in a secure location.
- Advise employees that no travel arrangements or ticket purchases should be made through GovTrip or directly with the TMCs during the period of lapsed appropriation.
- GovTrip approving officials should not stamp any documents in the system during the period of the lapsed appropriation.

3. Agency OCIO Actions:

- Instruct employees to turn off all computer equipment and change voicemail messages.
- Advise employees on the status of their Agency IT systems.
- Secure all websites; no updates during shutdown period.

4. Acquisition and Property Division Actions:

- Provide guidance on how to process essential requirements for supply contracts.
- Issue guidance to ensure that personal property (including securing hazardous materials pending disposal actions) is safeguarded to protect against theft and destruction.
- Inform O&M and other service contractors of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under.

5. Facilities Division Actions:

- Provide guidance on how to process on-going contracts for construction and architectural-engineering (a-e) services funded from prior year and no-year appropriations.
- Inform A-E and construction contractors of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under.

6. Extramural Agreements Division Actions:

- Provide advice and guidance on establishing or continuing existing Extramural Agreements deemed necessary by ARS program managers to support mission critical research or for the purpose of providing adequate care and protection of Government property; i.e., facilities, land, and/or livestock.
- Provide advice and guidance on transaction processing procedures to obtain/retain essential cooperator services as noted above.

Day One of Furlough

- All employees must report to work and will be informed by their supervisors that the only activities in which they can engage are those associated with an orderly shutdown of Agency operations. Employees can only, for example:
 - Notify parties involved in Agency matters of shutdown of normal business;
 - Prepare files for permanent storage, transfer to related agencies, or other disposition;
 - Perform those tasks necessary to protect confidential information, including listing all papers to be accorded confidential status;
 - Perform requisite administrative functions such as taking measures necessary to insure that employees are accorded all due personnel rights.
- Any employee on travel status should be contacted and told to return to the duty station immediately.
- Each employee whose shutdown function is complete will be notified and furloughed immediately.
- Excepted employees will be notified of their status and responsibilities by the supervisors.
- Contractors will be notified of the Government status and what limits/changes they will have to operate under.

Day Two (and Beyond) of Furlough

- Employees whose shutdown activities have not been completed will report for work. These employees will continue only those activities associated with shutdown as described above. Once completed these employees will be furloughed.
- All employees identified as “excepted” will report to work and will continue activities as outlined by their supervisors.

Upon Passage of Appropriation

- Public service announcements will be issued recalling employees. Employees should check the OPM website and listen to media outlets for updates.
- Managers and supervisors will be notified to return to duty and instructed to recall their staff.