

Form FHA 021-4

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**

TO:

ISSUE NO. 319

**State Office
Area Office**

**STATE PROCEDURE
NOTICE**

DATE: 01/10/2011

RURAL DEVELOPMENT MANUAL CHANGES

Procedure for Requesting/Granting Leave:

This PA PN updates previous PA PN 306, issued on 03/20/2008, to remove references to StarWeb T&A instructions, and mandatory use of OPM - 71. All leave requests can now be entered through WebTA in lieu of the OPM-71 form.

REMOVE: PA Instruction 2066-A, paragraph 2066.1 (f), page 1.

INSERT: PA Instruction 2066-A, paragraph 2066.1 (f), updated page 1.

Hazardous Weather Leave:

This PA PN updates previous PA PN 308, issued on 3/20/2008, regarding “Office Closures before the Workday Begins”, PA Instruction 2066-A, paragraph 2066.12 (r), pages 2, 3, and 4.

REMOVE: PA Instruction 2066-A, paragraph 2066.12 (r), pages 2, 3 and 4.

INSERT: PA Instruction 2066-A, paragraph 2066.12 (r), updated pages 2, 3, and 4.

2066.1 (f)

(f) Procedure for requesting/granting leave. In lieu of the OPM-71, the WebTA system can be used to request/grant leave. The accurate completion of the automated WebTA Leave Request (found at <https://wtausda.nfc.usda.gov/usda/>) is a shared responsibility among the employee, timekeeper, and supervisor. A detailed list of the roles and responsibilities of the employee, timekeeper, and supervisor during the leave request process can be found at <http://www.dm.usda.gov/webTA/>, or at the AgLearn website, www.aglearn.usda.gov.

A leave request is required as documentation for all leave taken with the exception of Administrative Leave for Federal holidays. This would include, but is not limited to, Annual Leave, Sick Leave, Credit Leave, Compensatory Leave, Leave Without Pay, Advanced Leave, Time-Off Award Leave, mandatory grants of Annual Leave to disabled veterans, if necessary for medical treatment, after sick leave is exhausted, and the advance scheduling of leave in excess of 3 days.

As standard operating procedure, the leave request will be completed and approved BEFORE the leave is actually taken. Some circumstances (illness, unexpected situations, etc.) will not allow for the request to be completed in advance. In this case, the request should be promptly completed upon return to the office. These situations, however, should be the exception, not the rule.

(1) The employee should initiate the leave request procedure by signing into the WebTA system, selecting the “Leave/Prem Pay” button, and then selecting the button “Leave”. Selecting the “New Request” button will send the employee to the next screen where they select the type of leave and transaction, enter the number of hours requested and the times they are to be used, mark any applicable buttons, and make any remarks. Once they have completed the screen, and clicked the “Save” button, the request should automatically be submitted to the employee’s leave approving supervisor. The supervisor will review the request and either approve or deny it. The employee will then be notified through an automated (system generated) email whether their request was approved or denied.

(2) The process outlined above should typically be completed BEFORE the leave is actually used. If the leave request changes (after being completed), the employee should sign into WebTA and correct the automated request.

Be aware that any leave taken that was requested and approved through the use of an OPM-71 form will also need to be entered into the WebTA system.

2066.12 (r)

OFFICE CLOSURES

- The State Director will be the Responsible Official for the State Office. *(Prior to the State Office opening, if the Governor should announce conditions in the Harrisburg area are hazardous enough to warrant All State Employee's under his/her jurisdiction staying home, then State Office Rural Development employees should stay home as well.)*
- Team Leaders/Supervisors may determine to close any office, excusing all employees from work, if one of the following occurs:
 1. Declaration by the CAC that an emergency exists for which Rural Development employees should be excused from duty.
 2. Official public announcement by State, local, or Federal authorities that driving and travel should be avoided because of an emergency condition; or,
 3. Approval of the State Director.
 4. In determining whether to close an office before or after the beginning of business, Team Leaders/Supervisors must consult with their counterparts in other collocated agencies of USDA and, to the maximum extent possible, coordinate their plans to promote equitable treatment of all USDA employees.
 5. Supervisors who determine that weather conditions are too extreme for employees to travel safely should also stay home.

EMERGENCY BEFORE THE WORKDAY BEGINS

- All employees are responsible for obtaining the appropriate information as announced by media. In cases of emergency dismissal or closure before working hours, the State Director or the local County Administrative Committee (CAC) will make every effort to notify the media or notify each individual of their decision before 6:00 a.m. and will provide one of the following announcements:
 1. Rural Development office is open on time and employees are expected to report as scheduled. Employees are reminded that Rural Development frequently does not make an announcement when no changes are required. When there is no announcement by the media or contact made to employees, employees are expected to report to work as usual. Any leave taken due to tardiness is subject to supervisory approval.
 2. Rural Development agencies are operating under an unscheduled leave policy; employees may take leave without prior approval. This means that Rural Development agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as "emergency employees" may take annual leave or LWOP without prior approval from their Supervisors. Accrued compensatory time may also be used instead of leave if requested by the employee. Employees should inform their Supervisors of their intentions.

3. ***Rural Development is operating under an Adjusted Home Departure policy. Employees are requested to leave home (to be announced by the media or direct contact made to the employee) xx hours later than their normal departure time.*** This means that employees should adjust their normal home departure time, based upon the normal business hours of 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Reasonable delays in reporting for work at their duty station/ADS will be excused up to the time designated without loss of pay or charge to leave for employees who experience serious commuting delays. For example:

- Employee A has a tour of duty that day from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM. The announcement by the media states that there is a 2-hour delay, due to hazardous weather. The employee will be excused and is not expected to report to duty until 10:00 AM this day, based on normal business hours of 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. The employee will receive 2.5 hours of administrative leave from 7:30 AM to 10:00 AM.
- Employee B has a tour of duty that day from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM. The announcement by the media states that there is a 2-hour delay, due to hazardous weather. The employee will be excused and is not expected to report to duty until 10:00 AM this day, based on normal business hours of 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. The employee will receive 1.5 administrative leave from 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM.

In both examples above, if the employee arrives later than 10:00 AM, the employee will be charged leave for the time they arrived after 10:00 AM.

4. ***Rural Development is closed.*** This means employees are excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. When an office is closed for the entire day, all employees from that office who are in a pay status are entitled to the administrative leave, including those on previously approved annual or sick leave. Only employees in a non-pay status are not entitled to administrative leave for that day (LWOP/AWOL).

An employee on an alternative work schedule (AWS) whose AWS day off is the same workday on which a USDA office is closed is not entitled to another "in lieu of" day off.

EMERGENCIES DURING NORMAL WORK HOURS

- When an emergency situation occurs during normal work hours, the State Director or CAC will announce that Rural Development is operating under an "adjusted work dismissal" policy. Team Leaders/Supervisors will inform employees when a decision is made to release Rural Development employees early. Additionally, whether an employee is charged leave during early dismissal periods depends on whether the employee was in a duty or leave status at the time of the dismissal. For example:
 1. Team Leaders/Supervisors should not charge leave, but grant excused absence, for any employee **on duty** at the time an "adjusted work dismissal" policy is officially announced. An excused absence is appropriate for the remainder of the workday following the employee's authorized time of dismissal, even if the employee is scheduled to take leave later in the day.

2. When an employee leaves after receiving official word of the pending dismissal, but before the time set for his or her authorized dismissal (with supervisory approval), the employee will be charged leave for the period remaining before the dismissal time.
3. When an employee is absent on previously approved annual leave, sick leave or LWOP for the entire workday, the employee will be charged leave for the entire workday.

STATE OFFICE NOTIFICATIONS

- Any Team Leader/Supervisor closing an office before or after beginning of business, must verbally notify the State Office (Human Resources) and follow-up in writing, certifying that this was a CAC decision, who was affected and the number of hours charged to Administrative Leave. ***The memo should identify who, what, when and why.*** (You should E-mail request to Human Resources for processing. Upon the State Director's concurrence, an approved copy will be forwarded to the timekeepers.)
- In the event the State Office closes, the State Director will notify Area Offices, the Under Secretary's Office and the Director, Emergency Preparedness Office.