

EMERGENCY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

Who decides if the County will close for an emergency?

The County rarely closes for business. Many core services are critical to the community during bad weather or following a natural disaster. Some operations are 24/7 and some offices must remain open for legal reasons (elections, courts) or to provide public safety services to the community. If there is a declared emergency, the County Executive will issue an Executive Order outlining the extent of the emergency and its impact on operations, including closure of some or all County facilities.

How do I get the latest information during an emergency?

- Sign up on the County's website for [alert notifications](#); including general county alerts, public health alerts, and road closures and restrictions
- Sign up for [public alert notifications](#) from Whatcom Unified Emergency Management.
- Check the News Flash feature on the County website
- Check for a recorded message on your county voice mail box
- Radio station KGMI 790 a.m. and KISM 92.9 FM
- Follow Whatcom County [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).
- Check the [Whatcom Transit Authority Twitter feed](#).

Who will work during an emergency closing?

That depends. Certain operations that are regularly staffed on a 24-hour basis will continue to operate, such as:

- Emergency Operations Center
- Sheriff's patrol
- Corrections facilities: main jail and work center
- Juvenile detention
- Public Works maintenance and operations

Closures in other departments will vary depending upon the type, size and impact of the emergency.

Who decides if I should come to work?

Your Department Head will decide which functions need to be provided during a period of limited operations or emergency closure. You will be notified if you are required to work. If not notified, do not come to work. Please talk to your supervisor ahead of time to be sure you understand your potential role during an emergency.

Will I get paid if there's no work because of an emergency closing?

No, if you do not work, you will get paid if you have accrued leave. Refer to your collective bargaining agreement or the Unrepresented Resolution for options on reporting time. Generally, employees may use accrued vacation or compensatory time off to complete the work week schedule. If there is no accrued leave, employees take time off without pay.

What if the County is NOT closed, but traveling to work is difficult?

We need you at work as soon as you can reasonably arrive safely. If you need to report later than normal to allow safe travel to work, notify your supervisor and discuss how you wish to change unworked time.

Can I volunteer my time during an emergency?

You may offer your services to the County for civic, charitable or humanitarian reason if your services are distinctly different from your usual job duties. You would not be considered a volunteer if you provide services that you regularly perform during the course of your employment and the County would be responsible for appropriate compensation. You may only volunteer services that are part of your normal job duties if it is for a public agency other than the County.

Will I still receive my paycheck during a period of limited operations?

The Finance department will follow its continuity of operations plan and will issue instructions to employees about submitting time during emergencies.

How long are my life, health, and disability benefits covered?

Coverage will continue while the emergency is sorted out. The threshold for benefits is generally 80 compensated hours per month. The County will notify employees if measures are needed to continue coverage if eligibility thresholds are not met.

What should I do if I get hurt at work during an emergency?

If you are hurt while at work, seek medical care and report the incident to your supervisor. If you are volunteering during a declared emergency, coverage will be coordinated through the State via the Emergency Operations Center.

What should I do to be prepared at home?

Have a plan, a list of emergency contacts, copies of important personal documents and records, a kit of food and supplies, necessary medications, and a kit for pets and vehicles.

Where can I find good preparation tips and checklists?

There are many resources to help with checklists and preparation, including the Department of Health, Washington State Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, Department of Homeland Security, and the 'Make it Through' website.

- Washington State Department of Health: www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies
- Washington State Emergency Management: mil.wa.gov/other-links/publications
 - Emergency Preparedness Guide published by Washington State Emergency Management at mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/Publications/emergencypreparednessguide2016.pdf
 - 72-Hour Comfort Kits at
 - mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/Publications/prepare%2072%20hour%20comfort%20kit.pdf
 - Vehicle Safety and Preparedness at mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/Publications/vehicle%20kit.pdf
- American Red Cross at www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies
- Department of Homeland Security - Ready America at www.ready.gov
- Makeitthrough.org at makeitthrough.org/