

# VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY AND MEDICAL CENTER

## HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### SUBJECT: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS POLICY

POLICY #: HR-018

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 1999

Revised: August/2009

## POLICY

It is the policy of Vanderbilt to maintain essential business services and operations during any incident or emergency situation while providing for the protection of life, health, and safety for all patients, students, faculty and staff. Essential business services include maintaining hospital operations, supporting students in residence, operating research facilities, and providing necessary support and administrative services for these essential functions.

## DEFINITIONS

**Incident** - An occurrence, either caused by humans or a natural phenomenon, which requires or may require action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or the environment.

**Vanderbilt Emergency Operations Plan** - The plan that outlines responsibilities of Vanderbilt staff members during an incident or emergency and provides guidelines for transition from normal to emergency operations. The plan is activated when a significant event threatens normal operations to allow Vanderbilt employees to respond to an incident or disruption of services while providing for the safety of our faculty, staff, house staff, patients, students, and visitors. More information can be found online by accessing the Emergency Preparedness website: <http://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/>

**Departmental Emergency Response Plan** - A plan that describes how a specific department will respond to emergencies that would suddenly and significantly impact the operations of the organization. Each departmental plan should include specific procedures outlining how the department will respond to, mitigate and recover from emergencies; the chain of command; communication protocol to ensure that accurate information is provided to staff members on a timely basis; define roles and responsibilities of staff. Additionally, departments are expected to

maintain a current call tree list including the names, position titles, contact numbers (e.g., home phone, pagers, and cell numbers), emergency contact names and phone numbers for each staff member. Departmental Emergency Response Plans should be updated annually.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **I. MAINTAINING EMERGENCY PLANS:**

The Vanderbilt Emergency Preparedness Plan and the Medical Center Emergency Operations Plan require that all departments/units must develop emergency plans for their area. Emergency Plans contain information relative to a location specific emergency, such as fire or bomb scare, as well as contingency plans to maintain essential business services during an incident or emergency situation. Contingency plans identify the staff, resources and supplies needed to maintain essential business services during varying types of emergencies. Emergency situations may arise from severe weather or natural disaster, mass casualty, fire, bomb threats, acts of terrorism, pandemic or other events.

### **II. ACTIVATING THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN**

The University is responsible for maintaining sufficient staffing levels to meet its needs on a continuing basis even during a time when the Emergency Operations Plan has been activated or the Emergency Response Team is in place.

In the event of an emergency situation, the Emergency Operations Center, in consultation with Human Resources and the Executive Team, will be charged with assessing the situation and applying the appropriate Vanderbilt policies or modifying said policies as necessary to address the situation at hand.

Vanderbilt may use various methods of communication to alert staff that the organization has activated the Emergency Operations Plan. Staff notification may include phone calls or mass messaging via Vanderbilt's telephone or e-mail systems, text messaging, announcements from the Office of News and Public Affairs as well as media outlets such as broadcast television and radio.

### **III. MAINTAINING OPERATIONS**

Each department is responsible for determining its most critical functionality and the appropriate staffing levels for business continuity during activation of the Emergency Operations Plan. Expectations and responsibilities for staff during such plan activation must be communicated to them in advance. Upon receiving notification that the organization is operating under the Emergency Operations Plan, each department is expected to respond in accordance with the established emergency plan for that department.

The Hours of Work Policy HR Policy# 030 <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/hr-030.pdf> addresses issues regarding staffing. However, the following modifications of the policy may be taken into consideration to maintain adequate staffing levels during Emergency Operations Plan activation:

**A. Work Assignments:**

In an emergent situation, it may become necessary to temporarily change a staff member's job duties, work assignments, and the location in which the duties are performed. The department management will use their discretion to determine what work each staff member will perform during the period.<sup>1</sup>

**B. Scheduling:**

Departments will notify the Emergency Operations Center before modifying staff schedules.

**C. Alternative Work Arrangements:**

Alternative work arrangements may be created in order to maintain business operations during Emergency Operations Plan activation. Departments should contact the Emergency Operations Center for review and determination as to whether flexible work schedules or telecommuting are appropriate. The department should have prior knowledge as to what duties can be performed off-site, a mechanism for tracking the work and productivity measures in place. Consideration of access to computers and Vanderbilt systems for each staff member should be taken into account when making arrangements. See the Alternative Work Arrangement Policy HR-023 for guidelines. <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/hr-023.pdf> All work must be reported in accordance with departmental procedure.

**D. Continuity of Coverage**

During a period in which an Emergency Operations Plan is activated, it is conceivable that members of the leadership team (Supervisors, Managers, Directors, Associate Vice Chancellors, etc.) may not be able to fulfill the duties of their positions. It is imperative that departmental response plans include designated persons to assume certain decision making responsibilities in the absence of staff in leadership roles. In order to adequately prepare for the potential absence of leaders, departments should designate a multiple number of staff who could fill in. These staff members would have to be properly cross-trained to effectively assume the additional responsibilities of a leadership role.

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<sup>1</sup> The Emergency Operations Center will respond to the need to develop staff labor pools and redeploy staff.

## **IV. REPORTING TO WORK**

Attendance of staff is critical to Vanderbilt's ability to provide services and maintain operations. Therefore, staff are responsible for having a Family Disaster Plan in place ahead of time in order to respond to the needs of the University and our community. Tools to help create a family disaster plan are available at [http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/ep/family\\_plan.htm](http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/ep/family_plan.htm) and <http://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/plans/personal/>.

Each departmental emergency response plan must include expectations for reporting to work when an Emergency Operations Plan is activated. Staff members may be required to report to work in their home department or be reassigned to perform work in other areas based on the needs of the organization.

### **A. Absenteeism/Tardiness**

Staff members who do not report to work for their scheduled shift and who have not been approved for an alternative work arrangement will be considered absent as set forth in the Vanderbilt Attendance and Punctuality Policy HR-026. <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/hr-026.pdf>

Additionally, staff members will be considered tardy when they report to work after the scheduled shift start time. The department is required to track attendance during an emergency response event. Vanderbilt reserves the right to review attendance records and address violations in accordance with the Attendance and Punctuality Policy HR-026. <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/hr-026.pdf>

### **B. Call-in Procedure:**

Staff members who are unable to report to work as scheduled are responsible for notifying the department of the absence in accordance with the departmental call-in procedure. It is possible that traditional methods of communication may not be readily available due to interruption of services. Departments should consider and implement alternative methods (e.g. text messaging, email) for staff to provide notification of absences or tardiness. In preparation for an emergency response event, staff members should receive advance communication of modifications made to call-in procedure.

## **V. SUSPENDING DEPARTMENT/UNIT SERVICES**

Departments/Units may suspend services or close with approval from the Emergency Operations Center. Staff may be assigned to the Emergency Operations Center Labor Pool as needed. If a department chooses to operate with a "skeletal staff" or is approved to close, the

following time reporting options are available:

**A. Non-exempt staff:**

1. Staff members may use an appropriate accrual bank (vacation, holiday, or personal day) to supplement any non-worked hours to complete their schedule, or,

2. Staff members may elect to take unpaid<sup>2</sup> time in lieu of utilizing an accrual bank in accordance with the Human Resources Hours of Work Policy HR-030 Section H/Office Closings. <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/hr-030.pdf> Those staff members who have elected unpaid status but have appropriate accruals available may not remain in a voluntary unpaid status for more than 7 scheduled work days, unless there is an institutional decision to extend this period.

**B. Exempt Staff**

Exempt staff members affected by departmental or service closures will be handled in accordance with applicable law and regulations. Before an exempt staff member can take unpaid time off, the department should consult Employee Relations for guidance.

Upon receiving notification that departments/unit services previously closed have resumed services, assigned staff are expected to be available to report to work as scheduled.

## **VI. ADMINISTERING LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

During Emergency Operations Plan activation, Vanderbilt will administer leaves of absence in accordance with applicable laws and existing policies.

## **VII. REPORTING A WORK RELATED ILLNESS OR INJURY**

Staff members with a work related illness or injury will follow the Work Related Accident and Injury Policy HR- 011. <http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/hr-011.pdf> During activation of the Emergency Operations Plan, staff should call the Occupational Health Clinic first to be directed to the appropriate location for treatment. Instructions for the appropriate

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<sup>2</sup> This is an exception to the requirement that staff utilize all appropriate accruals before going into an unpaid status.

actions to take regarding care, treatment, and returning to work are coordinated by Occupational Health. More information can be obtained by accessing Occupational Health's website: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/HRS/wellness/occhealth.htm>  
Approved by Lenon Coleman, Interim Chief Human Resource Officer

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Approved by Jerry Fife, Interim Vice Chancellor, Administration

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Approved by Jeffrey Balser, M.D, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor, Health Affairs

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