

DOL Frequently Asked Questions in the Event of a Lapse in Appropriations

Many of your questions can be answered by viewing [OPM's Guidance for Shutdown Furloughs](#) (PDF), including (but not limited to) pay, benefits, leave, retirement, and furloughs. We encourage you use the answers below as supplemental information.

General Questions

1. How long will a lapse in appropriations last? When will I be able, or required, to come back to work?

In general, agencies don't know how long a lapse will last, since that depends on enactment of funding legislation by Congress and the appropriations are passed into law. Any answer would be speculative.

As discussed below under Question 8, when a lapse in appropriations occurs, all DOL employees are expected to report to work on the next business day in order to perform orderly shutdown activities and receive instructions on their status. Following the completion of orderly shutdown activities, furloughed DOL employees should regularly monitor public broadcasts and [Current Status \(opm.gov\)](#) for the most recent information about the status of Government operations. Please note that, following the enactment of appropriating legislation which allows normal DOL operations to resume, all employees are expected to report for work on their next regularly scheduled workday, regardless of whether the resumption is temporary or for the balance of the year. Employees should report to their official duty station even if they have not received specific instructions from their supervisor to return to duty status.

1. Will I receive an official furlough notice?

Yes. Agencies are required to formally notify all employees who may be subject to a furlough. In the event of a lapse in appropriations and OPM and OMB have indicated that agencies should execute their lapse plan, the Department will notify all employees that they are furloughed. The Department will email these notices to your official work email address and post the notice on the Lapse of Appropriations website on [DOL.gov](#) and [LaborNet](#). **Please note that employees designated as “excepted/full-time,” “excepted/intermittent,” “exempt/full-time,” and “exempt/intermittent” also receive furlough notices. However, they will receive a second notice indicating them of their official status.**

2. Are any DOL employees exempt from a furlough?

Yes. Salaries for some DOL employees are not funded by an annual appropriation, and therefore they are exempt from a furlough due to a lapse in appropriations. In addition, individuals appointed by the President, with or without Senate confirmation, who are not covered by the leave system in 5 U.S.C. chapter 63, or an equivalent formal leave system, are not subject to furlough.

If you have been designated as an “exempt/intermittent” employee, you will be required to perform some work that is funded by a source other than an annual appropriation, but your assignments may not require you to work on a full-time basis throughout the lapse. Therefore, you should confer with your supervisor for circumstance-specific guidance.

3. My supervisor has told me that I've been designated as an “excepted” employee by my agency. What does this mean?

In the context of furloughs due to a lapse in appropriations, the term “excepted” is used to refer to employees who are funded through annual appropriations that have lapsed, but who are nonetheless excepted from furlough because they are performing work that, by law, may continue to be performed during a lapse in appropriations. Excepted employees include employees who are performing emergency work involving the safety of human life or the protection of property, or performing certain other types of excepted work.

If you have been designated as an “excepted/full-time” employee, this means you will be required to perform

work that must continue to be performed on a full-time basis despite the lapse in appropriations.

If you have been designated as an “excepted/intermittent” employee, you will be required to perform some work that must continue to be performed despite the lapse in appropriations, but your assignments may not require you to work on a full-time basis throughout the lapse. Therefore, you should expect to experience some period of furlough when you are not working on excepted activities.

During the period of a lapse in annual appropriations, all excepted employees must either be at work performing excepted activities, or in a non-duty, non-pay (i.e., furlough) status. Accordingly, you will receive a formal furlough notice notwithstanding the fact that you are authorized to perform excepted activities during the lapse in appropriation.

4. If I am designated as an excepted/full-time or excepted/intermittent employee during the shutdown furlough, will I get paid for the work that I perform during the furlough period?

Yes.

5. While I am in furlough status, can I check my work e-mail or do work off-site?

No. The law prohibits the Department from accepting voluntary services. Therefore, during a lapse in appropriations, employees who have not been designated as an exempt or excepted employee are furloughed and are required to cease all DOL work until normal operations resume. This means employees in furlough status cannot perform work activities.. However, furloughed staff are encouraged to log on to their DOL computers, Outlook, and other critical systems once per week during a lapse to ensure that system access is maintained.

6. What are the procedures for excepted employees to complete timesheets should the government lapse continue through multiple pay periods?

Time and Attendance Instructions will be posted on the same LaborNet and DOL.gov site as these FAQs.

7. What is an orderly shutdown and will I get paid for any work performed?

During the first workday after a lapse in appropriations occurs, you will have time, generally up to four hours, to perform “orderly shutdown” activities necessary to suspend ongoing work activities for an indefinite period of time. Such activities might include, among other things, notifying key contacts and external clients, rescheduling meetings, events, training, travel, and/or other planned activities as necessary, and securing information and property.

Employees will be paid for the time they perform “orderly shutdown” activities, generally up to four hours. Employees scheduled to be on leave (whether sick, annual, or other) on the day the lapse in appropriations is to occur and who do not participate in “orderly shutdown” activities will be in furlough status for the entire day.

8. How will I know when to return to work and duty status?

All DOL employees should regularly monitor public broadcasts and [Current Status \(opm.gov\)](#) for the most recent information about the status of Government operations. The Department will update DOL.gov as soon as possible after notice from the Office of Management and Budget that operations should restart. An all-employee message will also be sent to employee’s official DOL email addresses.

Please note that all employees are expected to report for work on their next regularly scheduled workday following the enactment of appropriating legislation that allows normal DOL operations to restart, regardless of whether the restart is temporary or for the balance of the year. Employees should report to work at their official duty station even if they have not received specific instructions from their supervisors to return to duty status.

CitiBank Credit Card Questions

9. Will my Government Citibank card account be suspended during a funding lapse or shutdown?
No. Citi will ensure that during a government-wide shutdown, cardholder accounts will not age delinquent or be suspended, even if payments cannot be processed during this period. This means your account will remain active, and you will not be penalized for delayed payments caused by the lapse.

10. Will I still receive monthly statements during a shutdown?

Yes. Statements of Account will continue to be generated and sent as usual. However, if you are furloughed or otherwise unable to make payments, Citi will not take adverse action on your account during the lapse.

11. Can I continue to use my Government Citibank card account during a shutdown?

Travel card and Purchase card use is restricted to authorized, mission-critical use only. If your travel/purchase is not approved as “excepted” under the agency’s lapse plan, you must not use your card.

Personnel Questions

12. What if I’m scheduled to retire or separate from DOL during the lapse in appropriations?

Employees who, on or before the requested retirement date, submitted some notice of their desire to retire will be separated effective the date requested, when the lapse in appropriations ends. The retirement request may be informal (such as a letter requesting retirement) and can be either mailed or personally submitted to the supervisor **and** servicing human resources office.

During a lapse in appropriations, an employee may submit a request for a retirement date via email, but if they are not in exempt or excepted status, the employee must use a non-DOL email account to transmit the request. During a lapse, furloughed employees are prohibited from using DOL-issued email accounts or DOL intranets. Any additional required paperwork, such as the formal retirement application form, may be completed when the agency reopens. No time spent by the retiree in such actions after the effective date of the retirement may be considered as duty time, since the individual would no longer be an employee of the agency.

DOL employees scheduled to transfer to another agency during a lapse in appropriations will remain on DOL’s roster until their separation can be processed (after normal operations restart). Employees will receive their notifications from DOL as to their status and stay in that status until operations resume.

13. Can excepted employees accrue credit and comp time? What about religious time?

Yes. Excepted employees who work during a lapse in appropriations may earn compensatory time off and/or credit hours, subject to established regulations. Employees will not be permitted to use earned compensatory time off or credit hours during the lapse. An excepted employee may work additional hours for religious purposes if the employee is performing excepted activities, though the employee may not use those hours until after the lapse in appropriations is over.

14. How will excepted and not-excepted employees address jury duty requirements on timecards during a lapse in appropriations and after a return to pay status?

During a lapse in appropriations, exempt employees record their time and attendance as normal. Excepted employees will be in furlough status when they are not working. Excepted employees are encouraged to keep a record of in/out times using a method whereby the information can be easily retrieved after the shut-down period at a later date. Jury duty can be noted on this record and further instructions will be provided once funding is approved.

15. May I use annual leave during a lapse in appropriations?

Unless the employee is exempt, all leave that is scheduled to be taken during the period of the lapse is cancelled, including donated leave. An agency may excuse an excepted employee from duty and place the employee in furlough status during a period when the employee was previously scheduled to be on paid leave.

16. How would a lapse in appropriations impact employees scheduled to start at DOL, as well as DOL employees transferring to other Federal agencies effective the same date?

Employees scheduled to enter-on-duty during a lapse should receive notice about their status from a human resources specialist in the servicing HR Office as part of “orderly shutdown” procedures. New hires will not be brought on board until funding is restored, and generally not before the beginning of the first available pay period after the lapse ends.

Employees scheduled to transfer from other Federal agencies or from DOL will remain on the rolls of their existing agency until funding is restored. If funding is restored during the middle of a pay period, the transfer would be processed at the beginning of the next available pay period.

17. What happens to employees on detail during a lapse of appropriations?

Detailed employees remain officially assigned to their permanent positions (whether at DOL or another agency) during a period of a lapse in appropriations. All employees on detail must return to the agency on the first business day of the lapse and receive further instructions from their agency regarding their status. In general, all details will be temporarily suspended during a lapse, unless the employee is exempt, and the agency has decided to continue the detail during the lapse.

Benefits / Unemployment Questions

18. How does my non-pay status during a lapse in appropriations affect my health, dental, vision and other benefits?

Please review [Employee Benefits Impact Chart: The Impact of a Lapse in Appropriations](#) (PDF).

19. If Open Season is occurring, can I make changes to my health, dental and/or vision insurance along with enrolling in Flexible Spending Accounts during the lapse of appropriations?

Yes. You can access NFC’s Employee Personal Page (EPP) for changing health plans, FSAFEDS.com for enrolling in FSA, and/or BENEFEDS.com for changing or electing dental and/or vision plans at any time during Open Season. These sites should be accessed from non-Government furnished equipment during a lapse in appropriation. If you are considering changing health plans, you may wish to change your email address in EPP to your personal email address. This will ensure that you can use EPP during the lapse in appropriations. This year Open Season is not yet scheduled, but will occur in November 2026 and Open Season election will be effective in January 2027.

20. Will employees be able to access the Employee Personal Page (EPP) during a lapse in appropriations?

Yes. Staff are encouraged to bring your DOL computer home and log in weekly to maintain system access. You may access the EPP page from your DOL computer at any point during the lapse. If you need to log into your EPP and do not have your DOL computer available, employees will need to use their EPP User ID and Password during a lapse in appropriations and not their Personal Identity Verification (PIV) Card. Employees should validate under “Preferences” in EPP that their two-factor verification code is not being sent to the employees work email address or government issued cell phone. If so, they should update this information under “Change Two-Step Authentication”.

21. I have bills to pay/need to make rent/etc. Will the Department do anything for me during a lapse in appropriations?

We understand that suspension of operations furloughs may present a hardship for Department employees. The Department does not control the rules governing a suspension of operations, nor can the Department control the length of a lapse.

The **DOL Federal Credit Union** (DOLFCU) may have staff working to answer phone calls, emails and continue to work on loan requests, however DOLFCU will not be open for walk-in clients. The DOLFCU ATMs at FPB will be operational, but may have limited hours or fund accessibility during a lapse in appropriations. For information, please check www.dolfcu.org.

22. Am I entitled to unemployment compensation during a lapse in appropriations?

While on furlough, employees may become eligible for unemployment compensation depending on the laws of the state in which the employee files for unemployment compensation. Exempt and excepted full-time employees who remain on their jobs on a full-time basis are generally not eligible for unemployment benefits because states may determine that they are still fully employed. Individuals classified as “Excepted/Intermittent” are generally working less than full-time and may be eligible for partial benefits depending on the hours of work, the amount of wages, and the laws of the state in which an employee files.

State unemployment compensation requirements differ by state. Typically, unemployment compensation is available to individuals who have been in a non-pay status for seven or more consecutive days and meet other eligibility requirements. A formal furlough notice and information on Unemployment Insurance will be issued to employees to assist employees in filing unemployment claims.

Employees considering filing for unemployment compensation should check local and state requirements. Employees may be subject to collection of overpayments if they receive both back pay and unemployment compensation for the same periods.

23. Will employees receive transit subsidy deposits?

Although a disruption to transit subsidy deposits is not anticipated, depending on the date a lapse occurs and when a DOL appropriation is enacted, there could be some disruption. This FAQ may be updated if warranted by circumstances.

During a lapse in funding, employees may use their transit benefits to travel to and from their official duty stations to perform “orderly shutdown” activities. After the initial orderly shutdown period, only employees who have been designated “exempt” or “excepted” may use transit benefits to travel to and from their official duty stations to perform “exempt” or “excepted” work activities.

24. What is the process for repayment loans against the 401k / Thrift Savings Plan during furlough?

In the event of a lapse in government funding, please check [this page](#) for information and updates.

25. If invoices for dental and vision premiums end up getting sent to an employee’s home during a lengthy lapse in appropriations, what amount is due? The total premium, or just the monthly amount that is normally funded by the employer?

There is no government contribution to federal employees’ supplemental dental/vision plans, but enrollees pay the premium through a payroll deduction. A bill to the enrollee will be generated when no premium payment is received for two consecutive pay periods. The enrollee should pay premiums directly billed to him/her on a timely basis to ensure continuation of coverage. There is no specific guidance on how the bill will be generated, i.e., biweekly or monthly at this time.