

Bureau of Reclamation

CONTINGENCY PLAN

September 2025



**Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Contingency Plan for a Potential Lapse in Appropriations
September 2025**

Overview

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Contingency Plan is provided in accordance with the requirement of Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11 Section 124.

Reclamation oversees critical national infrastructure, delivers water and power to millions, manages flood control through dams, and protects endangered species. It also administers federally owned lands with public access and environmental systems, often in partnership with other agencies. Services are provided through offices in Washington D.C., Denver, five regional hubs, and numerous field locations.

In the event of a government shutdown, certain staff will be designated as “Excepted” to maintain operations related to public safety, infrastructure, and law enforcement. Some offices will continue work with “Exempted” employees using non-lapsing or other available funding. Limited available Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) resources will support basic recreation visitor services like sanitation, road maintenance, campground operations, and emergency response. The Assistant Secretary for Water and Science will guide the orderly suspension of non-excepted activities, while regional and field offices will retain necessary personnel to support both Excepted and Exempted functions. Adjustments to this Plan may be made by the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science if a lapse continues for an extended period.

Orderly Shutdown

Shutdown designations.¹

Employees within each directorate, division, or region are assigned to one of six categories:

- 1) Exempt (access to non-lapsing funds)
- 2) Excepted-Authorized by Law
- 3) Excepted-Implied by Law
- 4) Excepted-Presidential Support
- 5) Excepted-Life and Property
- 6) Furloughed (may not incur obligation of funds)

Certain Excepted as well as Furloughed categories apply to employees otherwise funded by lapsing appropriations. Furloughed employees may be recalled to perform Excepted functions as necessary.

Employee Notifications Prior to a Shutdown.

Supervisors should acquire personal contact information for employees prior to a shutdown. Supervisors should notify staff of their designation within one week of a potential lapse. Supervisors will provide a Furlough Decision Letter to those employees designated to be Furloughed and make reasonable accommodations for an orderly and safe shutdown.

¹ Employees participating in the Deferred Resignation Program whose resignation dates extend beyond September 30, 2025 may be exempt to the extent there are sufficient available balances, otherwise they will be furloughed.

Lapse Plan Summary Overview

Short-Term Lapse

Short Lapse Plan (1-5 days) Summary Overview	
Estimated time (to nearest half day) required to complete shutdown activities:	0.5
Total number of agency employees expected to be on board before implementation of the plan:	4,111
Total number of agency employees expected to be furloughed under the plan (unduplicated count):	241
Total number of employees to be retained under the plan for each of the following categories (may include duplicated counts):	
Compensation is financed by a resource other than annual appropriations:	3,095
Necessary to perform activities expressly authorized by law:	1
Necessary to perform activities necessarily implied by law:	150
Necessary to the discharge of the President's constitutional duties and powers:	0
Necessary to protect life and property:	625

Brief summary of significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse:

There are a number of continuing (non-lapsing) government activities that are funded by annual appropriations that Reclamation must continue despite a lapse. Many area and field offices will remain partially or fully open to perform excepted functions or operations funded by non-lapsing sources. There is a higher overall number of Excepted employees in area offices given the nature of how water and power delivery activities are funded. To the extent they are available, apportioned carryover funds will be used to fund all otherwise Excepted positions. These positions will vary with examples provided below:

Examples of Excepted functions and positions applicable to Reclamation include:

- Presidential appointee confirmed by the Congress
- Law Enforcement
- Providing local and national emergency response, disaster recovery support to the Nation, and coordination and provision of Federal emergency response capability on Department and Tribal lands (e.g., Control Center Operators)

- Protection of Reclamation's Federal lands, buildings, waterways, equipment, and other property and infrastructure (e.g., Security Guards, including contractors, Regional Security Officers, and intelligence Specialists)
- Activities essential to ensure continued employee and public health and safety (e.g., water supplies). Positions include Dam Tenders, Water Schedulers, and Water Treatment Plant Operators
- Activities that ensure production of power and maintenance of the power distribution system includes Power Plant Operators and Dispatcher positions
- Activities necessary to maintain protection of research property
- Activities to support the development of the President's FY 2027 budget
- The minimum number of employees necessary to ensure the health, safety, regulatory, and security needs of Excepted Employees
- Uninterrupted command, control, and communications through agency leadership including any Government Shutdown teams established
- Maintenance of IT systems that are critical to the activities being carried out by Excepted Employees (e.g., radio communication protecting the cyber infrastructure, to include industrial control systems)
- Employees necessary to ensure available funding is not exceeded during a lapse in appropriations

Excepted employees will continue to perform duties related to the protection of life, property, or records; activities necessary to perform activities expressly authorized by law; or implied by law; or necessary to discharge of the President's constitutional duties and powers.

Lead timekeepers will be available to assist non-furloughed supervisors and managers so that hours are tracked correctly in the time and attendance system as exempt, excepted, or furloughed. This helps ensure employees are correctly paid during and after shutdown.

Exempted Activity - Personnel performing activities that could be funded from available funding sources may be authorized to carry out these functions, subject to the continued funding availability. Such available funding sources include permanent appropriations, unobligated balances brought forward in a no-year and multi-year appropriation, mandatory appropriations, allocations from other accounts, and some reimbursables. Some functions that begin as exempted may transition to excepted or furloughed status, and vice versa. Exempt employees whose salaries are paid from unobligated balances from prior years may continue to work as directed by their supervisors and subject to the continued availability of funds.

Brief summary of significant agency activities that will cease during a lapse:

Day to Day noncritical activities for the Bureau of Reclamation including but not limited to:

Furloughed Employee Actions.

Furloughed staff will take steps to complete an orderly shutdown according to supervisor instructions. Most furloughed employees will be given 4 hours maximum to complete their shutdown duties. Some staff will have extended shutdown duties taking up to 5 days (e.g., suspending contracts, returning from travel).

- Official Travel. Furloughed employees will be directed to cancel travel for government business, or if already in a travel status, to initiate plans to return to their duty station to complete shutdown

activities as soon as practical. This applies to both domestic and international travel. Excepted employees may travel only for excepted duties. Employees on a disaster deployment will be designated exempt.

- **Employee Leave.** Paid leave is not authorized during a government shutdown unless the employee is Exempt. Time sheets (for non-Exempt employees) will be updated with the appropriate shutdown codes per instructions from human resources (HR).
- **Equipment.** Furloughed employees are permitted to log into a government-furnished computer or cell phone for no more than 15 minutes per day to check for any official messages concerning recall to work. Staff may not conduct official work during a government shutdown.

Shutdown activities that will not be completed within one-half day:

- Closing non-exempt/excepted facilities where appropriate.
- Securing records, personal property, real property, classified materials, confidential business information, Personally Identifiable Information (PII), and Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI).
- Securing and locking access areas that will be closed.
- Coordinating information needs.
- Shutting down and securing IT equipment that will **not** be operational.
- Suspending contracts.
- The return of affected employees from travel status.
- Securing and/or mothballing assets and projects that need to continue during a lapse.

Long-Term Lapse

Extended Lapse Plan (over 5 days) Summary Overview	
Estimated time (to nearest half day) required to complete shutdown activities:	0.5
Total number of agency employees expected to be on board before implementation of the plan:	4,111
Total number of agency employees expected to be furloughed under the plan (unduplicated count):	241
Total number of employees to be retained under the plan for each of the following categories (may include duplicated counts):	
Compensation is financed by a resource other than annual appropriations:	3,095
Necessary to perform activities expressly authorized by law:	1
Necessary to perform activities necessarily implied by law:	150

Extended Lapse Plan (over 5 days) Summary Overview	
Necessary to the discharge of the President's constitutional duties and powers:	0
Necessary to protect life and property:	625

Under the long-term plan additional employees will be furloughed as carryover funding is depleted during a lapse; it is estimated that it will take 2-3 months to reach the full furlough amount.

Actions to Resume Orderly Operations

Communications

Notifications to prepare for, initiate, and terminate a government shutdown will come from official news sources, Department memorandum, and the Government Shutdown Coordinator. Specific directions and additional guidance will come from Reclamation leadership, HR offices, and supervisors.

Flexibilities Available to Supervisors

All Furloughed Employees will be available for call back to perform Excepted duties as needed given the nature of Reclamation operations. A reasonable amount of time for a called back employee to report for duty is defined as the next duty day or as directed by the manager or supervisor. Managers or supervisors will coordinate with the Government Shutdown Support Team (GSST) the recall and release of Furloughed employees with their servicing HR offices.

Resuming Normal Operations

On notification to resume normal operations:

- Provide official Reclamation notification of resuming normal operations through the GSST and Reclamation Leadership Team (RLT).
- Contact all Furloughed staff to return to duty/active status on the designated day of resumed operations.
- Re-activate shutdown facilities and offices and resume operations.
- Reconcile time keeping and other shutdown records.
- Provide notice to outside agencies/partners of status.