




United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

SEP 01 2017

Memorandum

To: Human Resources Directors
Human Capital Officers

From: Raymond A. Limon 
Director, Office of Human Resources

Subject: Human Resources Flexibilities

This memorandum serves to remind bureaus that a number of policies and flexibilities exist to assist Federal employees affected by a natural disaster. Heads of bureaus or their designee have the authority to implement these flexibilities pursuant to normal delegations of authority outlined in the Departmental Manual.

Bureau heads or their designee may authorize advance payments, evacuation payments, and payments for travel and subsistence expenses to employees who are ordered to evacuate from an area because of imminent danger to their lives as a result of a severe weather condition or other emergency situation. Bureau heads or designated official must make the determination that an employee was officially ordered or authorized to evacuate. Bureaus must follow the regulations outlined in 5 CFR part 550, subpart D, for evacuations within the United States.

Advance payments are authorized based on the opinion of the bureau head or designated official that the payment is required to help the employee defray immediate expenses incidental to the evacuation. The number of days the bureau official used to compute the amount of the advanced payments may not exceed thirty (30) days. **An advance payment is equivalent to a loan and must be treated as a debt owed to the Federal Government.**

Bureau heads or their designated official may authorize evacuation payments to an evacuated employee who is prevented from performing the regular duties of his/her position (as if the employee had continued to perform those regular duties). These payments should be made on the employee's regular pay days when feasible. Evacuation payments are not treated as debt owed to the Federal Government.

Additional guidance on evacuation payments may be found within the *OPM Handbook on Pay and Leave Benefits for Federal Employees Affected by Severe Weather Conditions or Other Emergency Situations* (link: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/reference-materials/handbooks/emergencybenefits.pdf>). Also, as a reminder additional HR flexibilities are outlined in an earlier Office of Personnel Management memorandum, dated August 27, 2017, at this link: <https://www.chcoc.gov/content/human-resources-flexibilities-hurricane-harvey-and-its-aftermath>.

Bureaus/offices are reminded to review applicable collective bargaining agreements as they may set forth additional requirements and to fulfill any labor-management obligations as appropriate.