

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CONTINGENCY PLAN

September 2015

As stated in its original authorizing legislation, the National Park Service mission is to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.”

Effective immediately upon a lapse in appropriations, the National Park Service will take all necessary steps to close and secure national park facilities and grounds in order to suspend all activities except for those that are essential to respond to emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property. Day use visitors will be instructed to leave the park immediately as part of Phase 1 closures. Visitors utilizing overnight concession accommodations and campgrounds will be notified to make alternate arrangements and depart the park as part of Phase 2. Wherever possible, park roads will be closed and access will be denied. National and regional offices and support centers will be closed and secured, except where they are needed to support excepted personnel. These steps will be enacted as quickly as possible while still ensuring visitor and employee safety as well as the integrity of park resources.

The shutdown process will take place in two phases. Phase 1 includes all activities to notify the public of the closure, secure government records and property, and begin winding down operations to essential activities only. Phase 1 will take place over a half day. If no funding bill appears imminent, at noon EDT on day one of a shutdown, Phase 2 will be initiated by the Director and includes the complete shutdown of all concession facilities and commercial visitor services. Overnight visitors will be given two days to make alternate arrangements and depart the parks. At the end of Phase 2 operations are expected to be at the minimum levels defined below. The entire closure process – both phases – will be completed within four days.

Part 1: Designation of Essential and Continuing Programs/Activities

The Emergency Response Official designation on a Federal ID card is not necessarily a factor in determining excepted personnel. Rather, as defined by the Department of the Interior, essential activities and activities that will continue during a lapse in appropriations are:

- Providing for finance and contracting activities such as benefit payments and actions necessary to suspend or stop work on projects currently underway that require oversight or support from employees funded from lapsed appropriations. That is, contracting and finance personnel necessary to perform these duties should remain until the activities can be suspended.
- Direct management of projects obligated from funds that are not subject to lapse, such as multi-year appropriations from prior fiscal years. People not DIRECTLY involved in project management or necessary contracting actions and payments for these projects will not be considered excepted or continue to work.

- Protecting life and property, including:
 - Emergency medical care;
 - Law enforcement and disaster assistance (in the absence of visitors);
 - Border and coastal protection and surveillance;
 - Protection of federal lands, buildings, waterways, equipment, and other property within the National Park System;
 - Activities essential to ensure continued public health and safety, including safe use of food and drugs and safe use of hazardous materials, drinking water, sewage treatment operation;
 - Activities that ensure production of power and maintenance of the power distribution system;
 - Activities necessary to maintain protection of research property;
 - Essential or time-sensitive support services for employees;
 - Uninterrupted command, control, and policy leadership;
 - Maintenance of IT systems critical to activities being carried out by excepted personnel (e.g., radio communication, e-mail, accounting systems, etc.);
 - Year-end financial management activities; and
 - Communication with employees and the public.

NOTE: Staffing will be held to the very minimum to perform essential functions. This will ordinarily be only law enforcement personnel, at a staffing level that allows for reactive emergency response commensurate with levels of park operations under the shutdown. Staffing levels will be based on the assumption that no visitors are present. However, in certain instances maintenance and IT personnel may be required for systems that normally require 24 hour monitoring or periodic maintenance, without which the system would shut down. Emergency responders, including Fire Management, EMS, and Law Enforcement personnel, not required for essential activities will be placed on furlough but may be called back to duty if an emergency situation arises.

Headquarters

In order to complete the required, essential activities defined above, the NPS Washington Support Office (NPS Headquarters) will retain key NPS leaders, as well as a bare minimum number of employees in policy coordination, communication, human resources, contracting, finance, and budget roles, including employees necessary to uphold our year-end financial management responsibilities. Employees required for centralized processing of payments for ongoing projects funded by multi-year appropriations will remain on duty at the minimum level necessary to avoid harm to life, health, and property. NPS leaders remaining on duty will include the Director, Deputy Director for Operations, and the Comptroller. Total excepted and continuing staff is estimated to be no more than 50 full-time employees.

Regional Offices

The National Park Service's seven regional offices play key roles in policy direction and coordination between the Washington office and individual national park sites. During the shutdown process, the regional leaders of law enforcement, administration, budget, contracting,

public affairs, and concessions management will remain on duty to implement the closure guidance. Once the shutdown is complete, each region will retain approximately three full-time staff members to conduct essential activities, disseminate information, both internally and externally, and ensure continued shutdown coordination and communication between Washington and the field.

National Park Sites

Due to the dramatic differences in operations, size, visitation, location, and infrastructure represented in national park sites, the number of employees required to carry out the essential activities defined above will vary greatly from site to site. As a rule, staffing will be held to the very minimum for the protection of life, property, and public health and safety, and staffing levels will be based on the assumption that no visitors are present. Only personnel absolutely required to support these activities will remain on duty. Wildland fire personnel required for active fires or for monitoring areas currently under a fire watch will remain on duty. All other personnel, including law enforcement, EMS, and Fire Management not deemed excepted will be furloughed, but will be subject to being called back in the case of an emergency. See below for employee counts by region.

Other Offices

The NPS maintains two project management support centers for large-scale projects – one in Harper’s Ferry, WV and one in Denver, CO. Many of the projects managed through these centers are funded through multi-year appropriations. However, even if an employee’s salary is funded from carryover or a multi-year appropriation, they are not automatically excepted from a furlough. Only employees conducting essential activities as defined above will be deemed “excepted.” Employees funded from multi-year appropriations typically rely on facilities and support staff who are funded by expiring appropriations, and thus managers will designate exceptions and furloughs based solely on whether an employee’s activities are essential or not. Employees at these locations necessary for DIRECT project management of ongoing projects funded by multi-year appropriations will remain on duty.

Special Events

“Special Events” involving park service personnel either as participants or in crowd control must be cancelled. A special provision has been made for first amendment activities in the National Mall and Memorial Parks and areas administered by the NPS Liaison to the White House in Washington D.C., and Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia, PA. Please refer to the NPS Closure Determination and Notice for the legal record of determination. As always, law enforcement action may be taken in cases where there is a violation of NPS regulations, including if it reasonably appears that the demonstration presents a clear and present danger to the public safety, good order, or health. This includes demonstrations that either qualify under the NPS small-group permit exception or demonstrations that have submitted an application, either before or after the shutdown that were not denied.

Part 2: Designation of Excepted Personnel

The following list of personnel required to carry out the essential activities defined above reflects current estimates of excepted employees. Please note that this remains an estimate, as the number of excepted employees will continue to fluctuate throughout the shutdown period. Please also note that this list reflect positions, though duties may be shared by one or more employees. Employees who report for a very limited number of hours per week – such as a maintenance employee who must conduct a safety check on a facility system – are still considered “furloughed,” though they will maintain a log of hours conducting essential activities during the shutdown period.

Total Employees Essential v. Furlough	
NPS Employees	24,681
NPS Employees deemed essential*	3,322
NPS Essential for Visitor Protection (LE, EMS, Fire, USPP)	[2,111]
NPS Employees to be Furloughed	21,359

Exception Summary by Organization

WASO Leadership	9
WASO Support Staff	75
Denver Service Center	21
Harper’s Ferry Center	7
U.S. Park Police	652
Alaska Region	41
Intermountain Region	777
Midwest Region	234
National Capital Region	122
Northeast Region	364
Pacific West Region	694
Southeast Region	326
TOTAL NPS EXCEPTIONS	3,322

*Inclusive of employees paid by non-expiring fund sources