

Greater Boston Federal Executive Board (GBFEB) EMERGENCY DECISION AND NOTIFICATION PLAN

Part I: OUTLINE AND PURPOSE:

When an emergency exists, Federal agencies need to react responsibly and in unison to protect the well being of the Federal workforce and its' customers. This *Emergency Decision and Notification Plan* (herein referred to as the Plan) outlines the GBFEB's procedures, identifies responsibilities and provides interagency communications strategies for use by Greater Boston Federal Agency leadership for *workforce planning purposes*. It also provides guidelines on designating emergency personnel and pay and leave policies as developed by the US Office of Personnel Management. The Plan was developed by a representative multi-agency Working Group for Greater Boston Federal agencies.

Part II: FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD AUTHORITY:

Federal Executive Boards were established on November 13, 1961 by Presidential Memorandum. As outlined in *Part 960 of Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations*. "Federal Executive Boards shall be responsible for... emergency operations, such as under hazardous weather conditions, responding to blood donations needs, and communicating related leave policies." (Reference: 5 CFR Part 960.107.)

Subsequent policy memorandums issued by the Director, US Office of Personnel Management have requested that Federal Executive Boards nationwide play a critical role in emergency preparedness and response from a workforce planning perspective in their communities. (Reference: August 15, 2003 Director James Memo)

As a central management agency of the United States Federal government, the US Office of Personnel Management includes Federal Executive Boards in its' national communications plan during times of national and local emergencies. Their plan calls for "immediate notification of changes to the operating status of the government to ... Federal Executive Boards and other key Federal and local authorities..." (Reference: Federal Manager's Decision Maker's Emergency Guide. 2002 available at www.opm.gov)

At this time, the GBFEB's role in emergency decisions and notifications is that of providing *up-to-date, consistent and accurate information* for decision-making purposes. In addition, the US Office of Personnel Management and the US Department of Homeland Security at the headquarters level have identified the FEB network nationwide as an integral resource for information about government-wide operations following an emergency. (Reference – February 14, 2002 Memo)

The FEB network's critical communication role has been outlined in several key national preparedness documents, including the National Response Framework (released March 2008*.)

The US Office of Personnel Management, on behalf of the FEB network, entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with FEMA to formalize the communications role (Reference: August 1, 2008.*)

Part III: SCOPE

Although each Federal agency is responsible for the safety of its' employees and the Continuity of Operations, this Plan assists Federal agencies with obtaining and coordinating relevant information that can be readily shared among Federal agencies and used for decision-making relative to the Federal workforce. It will also ensure that Federal employees and its' customers are provided with consistent and accurate messages.

Information gathered pertains to the employee's official duty station and not the employee's home or telework location.

At this time, this Plan is relevant for all Federal agencies located in the Greater Boston area (defined as inside I-495.) Facilities outside Greater Boston may prefer to develop their own plans since they are subject to different conditions.

GBFEB recommendations DO NOT pertain to agency personnel who have been designated as "emergency."

Information distributed pertains to Agency operations and employees only. The GBFEB DOES NOT close Federal buildings or other Federal facilities.

The Plan does not apply to private sector entities, including contractors.

The Plan does not replace Federal agencies' individual emergency plans or building occupant emergency plans but rather complements them and serves as a resource for information-sharing and uniform decision-making. The Plan was developed to mirror the procedures cooperatively outlined by the US Office of Personnel Management, the US General Services Administration (GSA) and DHS / FEMA in the "Federal Workforce Release Decision and Notification Protocol" for the National Capitol Region.

Part IV: GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Greater Boston Federal Executive Board Responsibilities:

The GBFEB's goal is to provide area agency heads with accurate, *consistent and up-to-date information* to assist them in making informed decisions. This includes information available from local public safety and law enforcement officials as well as the White House / Administration and US Office of Personnel Management policies.

EMERGENCY WEATHER CONDITIONS:

A Committee consisting of the GBFEB Chair and Executive Director, the US Coast Guard 24 Hour Operations Center, National Weather Service, FEMA, and GSA actively consult throughout extreme weather events. The GBFEB distributes relevant short and long-term forecast information gathered from local subject-matter experts from the National Weather Service during extreme weather conditions both during and after business hours so that Federal agencies can make informed decisions relating to their operation. Additionally, the GBFEB actively consults with State and local emergency management officials who contribute vital information on such things transportation and traffic, state and local operations, and other

pertinent public safety information. Federal agencies are charged with making their own decisions relating to the status of their workforce based on this real-time information.

DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION:

The GBFEB maintains 24/7/365 contact information for all local agency heads, and at least one back-up, and distributes the above outlined information via the United States Public Private Partnership ([https:// USP3.org](https://USP3.org)) communications platform supported cooperatively by the FBI and US Department of Homeland Security. USP3 enables us to communicate with members simultaneously via email, text page and/or telephone around the clock. Updates are performed regularly.

The GBFEB will also notify the US Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) 24-hour Situation Room of any recommendations and/or situations that may significant Federal operations in our area. The 24-hour situation room can be reached at 1-866-242-2429 / 202-418-0111 or email usopmsr@opm.gov. (This is included in USP3 announcements.) Contact: Paula Bridgham, FEB Operations Director, OPM, 202-606-1251 / paula.bridgham@opm.gov

OTHER EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:

Building on our weather-related experiences, the GBFEB developed an "all hazards" strategy to assist with convening the key Federal, state and local officials necessary to make informed decisions during other types of local or national emergency situations. The GBFEB Emergency Decision and Notification Committee, chaired by the First Coast Guard District Commander, will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis and convene appropriate experts and agency officials. Collectively, information will be distributed as appropriate both during and after hours. Examples of emergency situations include all types of manmade or natural disasters and terrorist threats or incidents.

NOTIFICATION PROCESS:

The GBFEB collects and maintains emergency contact information for each local agency head and their deputy or other designated officials for use in the event of a widespread emergency during work and/or non-work hours. This information is used only in the event of a widespread local or national emergency only. The GBFEB Chair and Executive Director will hold this information securely at all times.

Participation in this notification process is voluntary. In order to ensure and maintain an executive-level exchange, communications are designed for Federal agency heads, deputies or designated alternates only. The designated official should have decision-making authority relative to the Federal workforce. Each agency is requested to submit a minimum of two points of contact.

NOTE: We respectfully request that this responsibility not be delegated Facilities or Building Managers, COOP planners, or contractors and other non-Federal employees.

TESTING:

Notifications will be activated by collective agreement among the GBFEB leadership and only during those cases deemed as emergency. Scheduled and spontaneous tests will take place throughout the year on all systems to ensure that they are working.

NOTIFICATION MECHANISMS:

The GBFEB has the ability to communicate via several different mechanisms to ensure not only an up-to-date and consistent message but expedience and accuracy.

- **UNITED STATES PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (USP3.ORG):** Effective June 2007, the FEB network is included in the USP3 communications platform. USP3 enables us to communication with our members via email, text page and text to voice simultaneously around the clock. This web-based system requires no special software and can be activated from any computer. USP3 also enables FEBs to communicate with one another and with key Administration officials.
- **DEDICATED VOICE MAIL LINE:** The GBFEB maintains a one-way dedicated voice mail line that allows Federal agency heads and their designated alternates to call-to listen to the GBFEB-provided information. Executives may also call the GBFEB's main office telephone line. This system will continue to be used during weather-related emergencies and will serve as a back-up to USP3.
- **MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENTS:** The GBFEB will utilize the local media to announce recommendations *only* in extreme circumstances where the above mechanisms don't work and/or as needed in the event of a catastrophic disaster as determined by the Chair. Media announcements will NOT be routinely issued during extreme winter weather.

Part V: SUMMARY

The GBFEB WILL:

Strive to provide Agency heads with accurate, up-to-date and consistent information so that informed decisions can be made about agency operations;

- Continue to use dedicated voice mail line to provide detailed emergency weather (i.e. snow) information. Media will not be routinely used unless under extremely abnormal circumstances – hurricanes, tornadoes, etc.
- Maintain a database of emergency contact information for local agency heads and their designated alternates and update regularly and as needed;
- Facilitate communication with agency heads via USP3 when deemed appropriate by GBFEB leadership;
- Serve as the Federal liaison with Commonwealth of Massachusetts and City of Boston Emergency Management and law enforcement officials (for workplace purposes ONLY; NOT first response;)
- Provide regular status reports to the US Office of Personnel Management's 24 Watch Center (202-418-0111) and DHS / Federal Protective Service's 24 hour Mid Atlantic Mega Center (800 525-5726,) when necessary;
- Serve as a liaison with the FEMA and / or the designated Principal Federal Official, when needed;

- Distribute US Office of Personnel Management, Administration and other guidance as appropriate;

The GBFEB WILL NOT:

- Close Federal buildings or Federal facilities;
- Speak on behalf of any individual Federal agency (to the media, Federal employees or the general public;)
- Have final decision-making authority regarding the status of a Federal agency's operations;
- Designate "emergency" employees;

Agency Head Responsibilities

- Designate an individual who is empowered to issue their agency orders and how they will be administered within each agency.
- Submit emergency contact information for the senior agency official and at least one designated alternate for the GBFEB electronic communications systems at least annually.
- Utilize the GBFEB's recommendation, to make decisions about the operating status of your agency and communicating that decision to his or her employees. Application of this guidance should be consistent with the provisions of applicable collective bargaining agreements or other controlling policies, authorities and instructions. We recommend being as consistent as possible with other area agencies to minimize confusion.

Part VI: OTHER AGENCY ROLES: (Relative to THE PLAN; NOT first response)

DHS / Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):

To ensure continuity, FEMA is an ex officio member of the GBFEB Board of Directors. The GBFEB will work cooperatively with FEMA, and be represented at FEMA's regional operations center, when appropriate. FEMA also provides technical assistance for the development of agency COOP plans.

DHS / First Coast Guard District (USCG):

The USCG currently serves as an ex officio member of the GBFEB Board of Directors and leads the GBFEB Emergency Decision and Notification Committee. With the assistance of the Coast Guard's 24-hour command center, the Committee is able to convene appropriate parties during work and non-work hours, to gather pertinent information to collectively make a recommendation related to the status of Federal operations. This is typically done via conference call. Situations other than weather will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The 24-hour command center also maintain a standard operating protocol in order to serve as the back-up for GBFEB staff to active messaging via USP3.

DHS / Federal Protective Service (FPS):

The FPS Regional Director serves as an ex officio member of the GBFEB Board of Directors. With assistance from its' 24-hour megacenter, as needed, FPS provides the GBFEB with critical information during times of emergency, including traffic patterns, transportation difficulties and local states of emergency. FPS serves as out link to the Joint Terrorism Task Force and other Federal law enforcement agencies as well.

As part of its' routine efforts, FPS provides proactive security assessments through their Federal Security Risk Assessment Program by conducting periodic vulnerability studies and developing countermeasures to reduce risk. Reports are presented to the respective Building Security Committees. Under the Homeland Security Act of 2003 that FPS is responsible for security at ALL Federal facilities. Federal agencies in buildings not managed by GSA should contact the FPS directly for emergency preparedness or threat assessment information.

General Services Administration (GSA):

As the landlord and a central management agency of the civilian Federal government, GSA is an integral component of our communications system. GSA holds an ex officio position on the GBFEB Board of Directors. *It is GSA alone who determines the "closure" of GSA buildings.* Keep in mind that during certain situations, including inclement weather, individual Federal agency tenants may choose to curtail its' operations but buildings can remain "open." Additionally, GSA communicates with individual building tenants and other facilities staff when there is a critical incident specific to building. (e.g. maintenance problems)

GSA, not Federal Executive Boards, hosts "Building Security Committees (BSCs)" based on a 1995 US Department of Justice recommendation published in the "Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities." BSC membership should include at least one representative from each agency housed within a Federal building. It is recommended that the Agency with the largest presence in the respective building chair the BSC. BSC members will act for the Agency Head allowing them to recommend building security countermeasures. It is recommended that the Agency select a representative with decision-making authority as the implementation of certain measures may impact rent.

GSA provides technical assistance for the development of agency Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) across the Region.

National Weather Service (NWS):

The National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office is an integral component of our Plan relative to extreme weather. To that end, they hold an ex officio seat on our Board of Directors and fully support our efforts to provide accurate, consistent and up-to-date information to our agency heads during extreme weather and winter storm events. NWS' 24-hour command center also maintain a standard operating protocol in order to serve as the back-up for GBFEB staff and USCG command center to active messaging via USP3.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For more information or to comment on the Greater Boston Federal Executive Board's Emergency Decision and Notification Plan, please us at 617-565-6769 or kim.ainsworth@gsa.gov or visit www.boston.feb.gov

AGENCY HUMAN RESOURCES GUIDANCE ADDENDUM

At least annually, Federal agencies should identify employees who must report for work and continue government operations during a disruption of operations and notify them in writing that they are designated as “emergency personnel” (5 USC Sec 7106). The notice should include the requirement that emergency employees report for or remain at work when operations are disrupted and an explanation that dismissal or closure announcements do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise.

Agencies must be aware that those positions identified as “emergency” may vary depending on the emergency situation. An agency’s response can depend on the nature of the emergency, nature of agency mission and the emergency location. There can be different categories of emergency personnel. If an agency determines that a situation requires employees not designated as emergency employees to report for or remain at work when operations are disrupted, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.

Agencies continue to have discretionary authority to grant a reasonable amount of excused absence (without charge to leave or loss of pay) for individual hardships or circumstances unique to an employee. For example, factors such as distance, availability of transportation or childcare / eldercare alternatives may be considered. The official US Office of Personnel Management guidelines for supervisors to make these decisions can be found on their web site at www.opm.gov under “Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures for Federal Employees” and the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Chapter 1, Part 610, Subpart C – Administrative Dismissals. Although Federal managers have the discretion to offer “excused absences” to individuals or groups of employees for some emergency situations, it is not an entitlement. Each agency makes its’ own determinations on a case-by-case basis.

At least annually, agencies should provide written procedures for dismissal or closure to employees. The guidance should include information explaining the notification process.

Agencies are responsible for developing and maintaining a Continuity of Operations Plan. (COOP) The COOP provides guidance for, and facilitates the preparation of, site specific plans and procedures that help ensure the safety of their agency personnel. The COOP outlines how the organizational elements will continue essential operations in the event of an emergency or threat.

GBFEB recommendations for curtailment of government operations DO NOT pertain to agency personnel who have been designated as “emergency.”

Federal agencies in GSA-owned and leased space, particularly multi-tenant sites, should identify an employee with decision-making authority to represent the agency on GSA’s Building Security Committees.

ADDENDUM: GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

Employees should contact their agencies to request annual leave, leave without pay, and/or use of earned compensatory time off or credit hours when an “unscheduled leave” policy is announced. Agencies should notify their employees of the procedures for making such requests.

Employees must be aware that those positions identified as “emergency” may vary depending on the emergency situation. An agency’s response can depend on the nature of the emergency, nature of agency mission and the emergency location. There can be different categories of emergency personnel.

Employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the procedures that have been put into place at their agency, as well as the means of notification that an agency will use to inform and instruct employees.

GBFEB recommendations for curtailment of government operations DO NOT pertain to agency personnel who have been designated as “emergency.”

Employees are encouraged to develop personal family plans for use during times of emergency. These plans should outline *in advance* what should be done an emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation, use common sense and whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Think about the places where your family spends time: school, work and other places you frequent. Ask about their emergency plans. Find out how they will communicate with families during an emergency. If they do not have an emergency plan, consider helping develop one. The US Department of Homeland Security hosts a web site to provide guidance to the general public for all sorts of emergency situations. (Source: www.ready.gov)