

Emergency Traffic Plan

Events such as power outages and winter storms can result in near gridlock for commuters. We recommend that every organization develop a written Emergency Traffic Plan. The goal of the plan is to stagger traffic when driving conditions are extremely hazardous, so that not all commuters are on the road at the same time. The benefits would include a reduction of traffic accidents, quicker response for emergency vehicles, reduced congestion and commuting time, and improved air quality. When the plan is activated it would allow participating employees to report late or leave work early, according to the provisions of the plan. The plan should address the following issues:

1. **Activation:** The plan should clearly state who has the authority to activate it: director, supervisor, department head, etc. Morning activation of the plan can be accomplished in several ways. Small organizations could rely on a phone tree. The authorized person activates the plan and begins the first calls on the phone tree. Larger organizations with too many people to call could tie activation to local school cancellations or Winter Storm Warnings. School closures and National Weather Service Winter Storm Warnings are carried by local media. When participating employees hear of a Storm Warning or school closures, they would know that the plan is activated.

Activating the plan once employees are at work is easy. When an event occurs that could have a significant effect on traffic, such as a power outage or snow storm, the authorized person may activate the plan and begin releasing employees early. Small organizations may want to release most employees as early as possible. Larger organizations may want to release employees in staggered shifts so that not everyone is on the road at the same time. The plan would remain in effect for one day only and must be re-activated each day that it's needed.

2. **Mechanism:** The mechanism for permitting employees to report late or leave work early should be clearly stated. There are three general means that can be used to account for the missed time.

- Method 1 is administrative leave, which means that employees would be paid for the missed time. There may be a limit on this type of leave, for example a maximum of two hours per month.
- Method 2 is an altered work schedule. This means that employees may report late for work provided they make up the lost time later. For example, they may begin and leave work one hour later than normal, or they make up the lost time the next day. Many organizations already allow for flex-time hours.
- Method 3 is the use of comp time, annual leave, or other discretionary time to account for the missed work.

3. **Time Allowed:** The plan should clearly specify when employees may arrive at work. For example, whether employees are permitted to arrive 1, 2, or more hours late.

4. **Eligibility:** In some organizations certain employees may not be eligible to participate in the plan due to the nature of their work. These employees should be clearly identified either by name, job title, department, division, etc.

5. **Participation:** If possible, employee participation in the emergency traffic plan should be voluntary. If the plan is activated it should be the employees choice whether or not to participate in it on that day.

The following is a sample Emergency Traffic Plan. Organizations may use it as is and fill in the blanks, or modify it to suit their individual needs. All items listed below should be addressed in the plan. Participating employees should be given a copy of the plan.

SAMPLE EMERGENCY TRAFFIC PLAN

Employees of (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) are encouraged to participate in the Emergency Traffic Plan. It is the policy of this organization to permit employees to have altered work schedules in order to promote safe commuting.

1. The plan will be activated on mornings when (LOCAL WINTER STORM WARNING ISSUED BY NWS / (NAME) SCHOOL DISTRICT CLOSES SCHOOLS).

(NAME/S, POSITION/S) has/have authority to activate plan when required and release employees early.

2. Employees may report for work up to (NUMBER) hours later than normal when the plan is activated.

3. Employees must use vacation or comp-time to account for the missed hours of work. Employees will indicate (ON TIMESHEET OR TO SUPERVISOR) how they would like to account for the missed work hours.

4. (ALL, DIVISION, SECTION, ETC.) employees are eligible to participate in the plan.

5. Participation is voluntary. Employees are not required to report late when the plan is activated, it is only an option.

6. Employees are responsible for knowing the details of the Emergency Traffic Plan. Employees are reminded of their standing obligation to get to work on time unless the plan is activated. Liberalizing work hours is done in the interest of safeguarding lives and property during hazardous driving conditions.