

Employee Lapse FAQs

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General Staff Guidance for Shutdown

I. Background

A shutdown furlough is an unplanned or emergency event when there is a lapse in appropriations (funding). If Congress does not pass an appropriations bill or a Continuing Resolution by midnight, September 30, 2025, the government is required to limit operations under the Antideficiency Act. During a shutdown furlough, the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) must shutdown any activities funded by annual appropriations that are not excepted by law. As a result, agencies, including NSF, need to implement their plans for a government-wide lapse in appropriations and provide guidance on its impact on agency staff and contractors.

In the Event of a Lapse in Appropriations

- If the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directs the agency to shut down, the various organizations within NSF must cease normal operations once they have exhausted any carryover funding for federal staff payroll and related operations. All parts of NSF, including the National Science Board (NSB) and the Office of Inspector General (OIG), will cease normal operations immediately.
- NSF will issue a furlough notice, an excepted from furlough notice, or an exempt from furlough notice to each employee by email, according to their individual status on October 1st.
- Employees should monitor NSF's website, listen to media outlets for government operating status, and check the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website or the OPM Alert app for operating status to keep abreast of the latest news regarding the budgetary status of the United States Government once their organization shuts down.

II. Building Access

- The NSF headquarters building will be open from 6:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 1st for staff who wish to conduct shutdown activities onsite.
- Furloughed employees will complete the process of closing out their work on October 1st, 2025, and must exit the NSF building or, if working remotely, log off from NSF systems and devices by 1:30 p.m.
- Starting at 1:30 p.m. on October 1st, only those excepted employees with a need to perform duties in the building are permitted to be in the NSF headquarters, and employees are not authorized to work, in either an official or volunteer capacity unless they have been notified that they are excepted or exempt from furlough. This includes viewing and responding to emails from NSF accounts. Performing any government work while on furlough due to a lapse in appropriations is a violation of the Antideficiency Act and could result in disciplinary and other adverse actions.

III. IT Availability

Remote access is being turned off for staff who have been furloughed. Excepted and exempt personnel should use one of the two remote access methods identified below throughout the furlough.

- For VPN access through your Seamless Mobile Computer using your PIV, select “access.nsf.gov/tempPIV”.
- For personnel who connect remotely using Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), please establish your session by logging in at <https://vdi.nsf.gov>.

During the furlough, the IT Service Desk (ITSD) staff will be working remotely and will be available to provide virtual support to excepted and exempt personnel 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. The ITSD can be reached through the Employee Service Center by phone at 703-292-HELP (x4357) or 1-800-711-8084, or by email at ITServiceDesk@nsf.gov. If the IT Service Desk cannot resolve your issue remotely, you will be scheduled for an on-site appointment the next business day. If you have an IT issue outside of business hours, please contact 703-292-5050.

IV. Timekeeping

Q. How are my hours of duty impacted by the furlough?

If there is a lapse in funding appropriations on September 30, 2025, all parts of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) will begin to furlough employees at 12:00 a.m. on October 1, 2025. Once NSF begins a lapse furlough, employees have up to 4 hours on the following business day to complete shutdown-related activities, such as completing timesheets necessitated by the furlough. Those shutdown-related activities are expected to happen on October 1, 2025, or your next scheduled work day if you are on leave October 1st.

- No other work may be performed during the furlough, except by the few employees excepted or exempt from furlough. Those few employees excepted or exempt from furlough will be notified of such in advance. Please see the “Guidance for Excepted Employees” section in this document for more specific information.
- NSF has worked closely with our payroll provider, Interior Business Center (IBC), to outline acceptable shutdown processes for payroll activities and to ensure that our timesheets are prepared in accordance with guidance from IBC. Questions may be directed to nsf-payroll@nsf.gov.
- Since we do not know the duration of the furlough, we ask that you DO NOT validate or certify any timesheets for the current pay period. Please code your timesheet using the guidance below and save it. Depending on the duration of the furlough, the Payroll Team in the Division of Human Resource Management (HRM) will ensure that all timecards are validated and certified on your behalf.

Q. How should I code my timesheet this pay period?

Time on the First Day of Furlough

- The first day of the furlough for all parts of NSF is October 1, 2025. Furloughed employees may not take paid time off (leave) during the period of furlough. On the first day of furlough,

employees will have up to 4 hours to complete shutdown-related activities. Thereafter, furloughed employees may not work until the furlough has ended.

Timesheet Guidance

- Do not code anything after the first day of furlough. If leave is recorded, leave it on there until HRM issues additional guidance. If the shutdown goes beyond one pay period, HRM will make any necessary adjustments and process timesheets for everyone. Additional guidance will be issued by HRM after the government re-opens to describe how corrections should be submitted in Quicktime.

Q. How does this differ for employees excepted from furlough?

- Employees should record their time in Quicktime through September 30. Do not validate or certify timesheets. If employees perform shutdown activities on October 1, the time should be recorded outside of Quicktime to keep track of the hours. Once the lapse has ended, the hours will be added back in Quicktime. Separate guidance will be issued to employees designated as excepted on how to track hours worked during the furlough in Quicktime.

V. Pay and Benefits Under a Shutdown

- Guidance for time and attendance will be provided to NSF staff following resumption of normal business.
- NSF's payroll provider, the Interior Business Center (IBC), will process payroll for hours worked prior to the shutdown furlough.
- If the lapse ends by October 7, employees will receive a full paycheck for pay period 2025-21 (September 21 – October 4). If the lapse extends beyond October 7, employees will be paid for a partial pay period (September 21 – September 30).

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program

FEHB coverage will continue even if an agency does not make the premium payments on time. Since the employee will be in a non-pay status, the employee share of the FEHB premium will accumulate and be withheld from pay upon return to pay status.

Federal Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)

Payroll deductions will cease for any employee that does not receive pay. BENEFEDS will generate a bill to enrollees for premiums when no payment is received for two consecutive pay periods. The enrollee should pay premiums directly billed to them on a timely basis to ensure continuation of coverage.

Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)

FEGLI coverage continues for 12 consecutive months in a non-pay status without cost to the employee or to the agency. Neither the employee nor the agency incurs a debt during this period of non-pay.

Flexible Spending Accounts

Payroll deductions will cease for any employee that does not receive pay. The employee remains enrolled in FSA, but eligible healthcare claims incurred during a non-pay status will not be

reimbursed until the employee returns to a pay status and allotments are successfully restarted. The remaining allotments are recalculated over the remaining pay periods to match the participant's election amount.

Eligible dependent care expenses incurred during a non-pay status may be reimbursed up to whatever balance is in the employee's dependent care account if the expense incurred during the non-pay status allows the employee (or spouse, if married) to work, look for work, or attend school full-time.

Federal Long-Term Care (FLTCIP) Program

Payroll deductions will cease for any employee that does not receive pay. Coverage will continue so long as premiums are paid. If Long Term Care Partners (LTCP) does not receive payment for three consecutive pay periods, they will begin to directly bill the enrollee. The enrollee should pay premiums directly billed to them on a timely basis to ensure continuation of coverage.

Retirement

For employees who provided prior notice (formal or informal) of their intent to retire to the HRM Benefits Team, the retirement will be processed on the requested effective date when the lapse in appropriations ends. No time spent by the retiree in such actions after the effective date of the retirement may be considered duty time since the individual would no longer be an employee of the agency.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

A lapse in appropriations does not prevent TSP participants from requesting a new TSP loan. The established eligibility requirements continue to apply. TSP participants can go to www.tsp.gov/tsp-loans for more information about eligibility requirements. Visit www.tsp.gov/shutdown for details about what to do during a lapse in appropriations.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Paid Parental Leave

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) considers any previously scheduled FMLA leave, including Paid Parental Leave, that occurs during a lapse in appropriations to be canceled unless the employee is an excepted employee who elects to use leave. Any leave without pay (LWOP) that was previously scheduled to be used under FMLA during a period when there is a lapse in appropriations will remain as LWOP, but the LWOP will not be considered FMLA leave and will not count against the FMLA 12-week limit.

If an employee had previously scheduled to substitute qualifying paid leave for unpaid FMLA leave during a period covered by a lapse, the paid leave must be canceled and converted to a furlough period unless the employee performs excepted work or elects to use leave.

VI. Travel

If an appropriation or Continuing Resolution is not passed before midnight, Tuesday, September 30, 2025, NSF will begin implementing its plan for operations during a lapse in appropriations. The

current government operating status can be found on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website, <http://www.opm.gov>.

In the event of a lapse in appropriations, all NSF travelers in approved travel status after midnight, Tuesday, September 30, 2025, will be asked to return as soon as reasonable or practicable (if an immediate return is not possible). If on Independent Research/Development (IR/D)-Home travel, the traveler may elect to not return during the lapse in appropriations.

All travel beginning after Tuesday, September 30, 2025, will not be authorized, and no new travel should commence after the lapse in appropriations begins. See OPM's website for more information.

During the lapse in appropriations, NSF will instruct our Travel Management Contractor (ADTRAV for NSF staff and invitational travel) to cancel all reservations on a day-by-day basis until NSF receives funding (either by a full-year appropriation or a temporary Continuing Resolution). All NSF travelers in travel or training status at the time of the lapse in appropriations will automatically go into a non-pay status and should immediately contact ADTRAV to make arrangements to return home.

ADTRAV: NSF Staff/Invitational Travel

Reservations: 866-565-7366

Email: nsf.travel@adtrav.com

Excepted personnel performing "excepted functions" should contact their respective offices for guidance.

VII. Outside Employment and Other Ethics Rules During Furlough

Ethics Rules Continue to Apply

When on furlough, employees and IPAs remain subject to the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, including all the conflict-of-interest rules, ethics regulations, and NSF supplemental ethics regulations, just as if they were on duty.

Restrictions on Certain Outside Employers

Employees and IPAs may accept employment or engage in activities that do not conflict with their government position. Conflicting employment/activities include:

- Working for a foreign government;
- Contacting another Federal agency on behalf of another entity or individual; and
- Working for a university, grantee, or contractor that you have dealings with at NSF.

Note that outside employment activities closely related to your NSF duties require prior ethics and supervisory approval.

Political Activities

When on furlough, the rules on engaging in political activities also continue to apply. Employees and IPAs may not use any NSF resources, including their NSF title, when engaging in partisan political activities. Employees and IPAs may not engage in fundraising for a political party or candidate. Career SES may not engage in activity that is in concert with a political party or candidate, including assisting in political campaigns or holding office in a political party.

Gifts

Employees and IPAs remain subject to the gift rules. You may not accept a gift from anyone who does or seeks business with NSF unless an exception applies, such as a gift of \$20.00 or less, the gift is clearly based on a personal relationship, or a Widely Attended Gathering that has been approved in advance. Employees and IPAs may accept gifts, including discounts, offered to all federal employees.

NSF's Designated Agency Ethics Official, Francisco Ruben (coi@nsf.gov) is available to respond to ethics questions during the lapse in appropriations.

VIII. Additional Guidance on Lapse

For frequently asked questions regarding furloughs associated with a lack of appropriated funds, please see the following OPM Guidance: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/guidance-for-shutdown-furloughs.pdf> and <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/reference-materials/special-instructions-for-agencies-affected-by-a-possible-lapse-in-appropriations-starting-on-10-1-2025/>. Information about the furlough may also be found on NSF's website at nsf.gov.

IX. NSF Contractors

Contractors may be directed by the NSF Contracting Officer to continue work during the furlough under a specific set of circumstances.

Guidance for Furloughed NSF Employees

- Furloughed employees are not allowed to report to work or volunteer their services, even from remote locations. Following the shutdown of their workstations after completion of orderly shutdown activities, furloughed employees will not have access to NSF offices or systems until the government reopens.
- Remote access to NSF systems will be disabled during the furlough except for authorized (i.e., excepted and exempt) staff. The prohibitions of the Antideficiency Act extend to work performed outside the office, including via personal mobile devices or remote computer connections. Performing any government work while in furlough status is a violation of the Antideficiency Act and could result in disciplinary and other adverse actions.
- Per OPM guidance for shutdown furlough an employee may use Government equipment for the following purposes:
 - Accessing their personal employee records;
 - Completing a background investigation;
 - Checking the status of the shutdown furlough;
 - Checking for any Reduction in Force (RIF) updates, or providing additional RIF information;
 - Updating personal contact information;
 - Completing or submitting Federal Employee Health Benefit changes; and
 - Completing or submitting a retirement application.
- If you currently access NSF email on your personal device, you must disable access to NSF email on your device for the duration of the shutdown. To do this on an iOS device (e.g., iPhone or iPad), go to Settings > Mail > Accounts and select the NSF Email account. On the next screen, slide the Mail button toggle from On to Off to turn Off Mail, Contacts, Calendars and Reminders. On an Android device, open the InTune Company Portal and swipe up to access your work profile > Select the email app that you enabled for NSF mail > Select the Settings Icon (gear) and choose NSF email account > Uncheck the Sync Email option to stop syncing NSF email and services on the mobile device.
- If you are enrolled in university courses paid for by NSF that you attend during non-duty hours and funding has been previously obligated, you may attend classes during the shutdown period.
- Training you are scheduled to attend during duty hours, even if pre-paid, must be rescheduled.
- If you experience a qualified life event for health benefits and/or life insurance during the shutdown period, you should send an email to fundinglapse@nsf.gov from your personal email, copying your official NSF email, for assistance.
- Employees should monitor NSF's website, listen to media outlets for government operating status, and check the OPM website or the OPM Alert app for operating status.
- Furloughed employees on administrative leave under the deferred resignation programs or VERA are not required to conduct shutdown activities.
- Furloughed employees may conduct shutdown activities for up to four hours, and in some instances, may take much less time. These shutdown activities may include receiving and

acknowledging furlough notices, completing any required time and attendance actions, securing files and equipment, and other activities necessary to preserve the employee's work. Following shutdown activities, staff should log off desktop computers and laptops but leave them powered on if they remain in the building. NSF-issued mobile devices and laptops must be turned off if removed from the building unless using for one of the exceptions noted above.

- Furloughed staff may conduct shutdown activities remotely (via telework). If you are approved for telework or remote work, you may access NSF systems and utilize NSF-issued mobile devices only for the purpose of conducting shutdown activities. Following the completion of remote shutdown activities, NSF-issued mobile devices and laptops must be turned off unless using for one of the exceptions noted above.
- You may need a hard copy of your furlough notice and a copy of your SF-8 to file for unemployment benefits, so employees should print and retain a copy of their notice. In the event that you cannot access your NSF e-mail, you can request a copy of your furlough notice by e-mailing fundinglapse@nsf.gov from your personal e-mail account.
- You may be required to repay any unemployment insurance payments once an appropriations bill is enacted and you receive pay for the period of the furlough.

Please discuss any further questions about lapse activities with your supervisor.