
Policy #HR011: Essential and Non-Essential Personnel Designation

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Approved by: Jon Anderson
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President

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A. Intent

Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest) is committed to protecting the safety of students, faculty, staff, and visitors while maintaining continuity of instruction and essential operations during inclement weather, emergencies or other hazardous environmental conditions.

The intent of this policy is to establish clear guidelines designating essential and non-essential positions and to define employee work expectations and reporting requirements during modified campus operating statuses.

This policy supports the University's Continuity of Operations Program and aligns with [Commonwealth Management Directive 530.17, Partial and Full Day Closings](#).

B. Definition(s)

Continuity of Operations Program (COOP) means the University's framework for maintaining essential functions and services during disruptions to normal operations and restoring operations following an emergency or other significant event.

Essential Employee means an employee who occupies a designated essential position and is required to report to work and/or remain on duty during all operating statuses including prevailing emergencies or other hazardous environmental conditions.

Essential Operations means University non-instructional functions or services needed to maintain necessary provisions for students, faculty and/or staff despite or because of prevailing emergencies or hazardous conditions. Designated essential operations will be maintained on campus during all operating statuses, including prevailing emergencies or other hazardous environmental conditions.

Essential Position means a position designated by the University as necessary to support essential operations and/or continuity of essential functions during any modified campus operating status, emergencies or hazardous conditions.

Hazardous Environmental Conditions means weather-related or other environmental circumstances (e.g., snowstorms, flooding, power outages, public safety emergencies) that modify normal operations.

Non-Essential Employee means an employee whose position has not been designated as essential and who is not required to report to work during authorized delayed openings, early releases, or essential only operating days, unless specifically directed by a supervisor.

C. Policy Statement

Designation of Essential Positions

- The University will designate certain positions as essential based on operational necessity and the need to support critical services, emergency response and continuity of operations. Essential positions may include, but are not limited to:
 - University Police or campus safety personnel.
 - Facilities personnel (Grounds, Trades, Housekeeping) who may be responsible for snow removal, maintenance, emergency response, and hazardous environmental conditions mitigation.
 - Health Services staff.
 - University Housing and Conference Services staff with on-call responsibilities.
 - Residence hall staff with safety or supervisory responsibilities.
 - Other positions as determined by the President or appropriate Vice President based on the nature of the hazardous environmental condition, emergency and operational needs.
- Human Resources, in coordination with division leaders, will:
 - Maintain a list of essential positions;
 - Provide written notice of essential designation to affected employees annually; and
 - Update designations as operational needs change.
- Essential employee designation under this policy does not replace departmental continuity planning requirements. Departments responsible for maintaining essential functions shall identify continuity staffing requirements through their Continuity of Operations Plans.

D. Related Policies

[Operating Status \(FA005\)](#)

[Staff Teleworking Policy \(HR030\)](#)

[Safety and Risk Management \(FA052\)](#)

E. Contact Information

For additional information, please contact the Office of Finance and Administration or the Office of Human Resources.

F. Policy Review Schedule

Each policy shall be reviewed by the corresponding Vice President on a regular basis as appropriate.