



Tips and Tidbits
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SUBJECT: What are Key, Emergency Essential, and Mission Essential Positions and who may be excused during emergency situations?

Recently the Fort Benning tri-community experienced severe weather conditions that resulted in the installation being closed for normal business operations. Even though the majority of personnel were administratively excused from coming to work, some employees were still required to report for duty to maintain infrastructure operations, health, safety, and security. Much discussion regarding “mission essential” personnel has since occurred – Who are these employees? How and why are they designated as such? What responsibilities do these personnel have? Some have erroneously equated these employees as being “key” and “emergency essential”, appellations also carrying responsibilities unique to the position; however, these terms and employee designations do not permit mutual substitution. In order to dispel misunderstanding, a brief exploration and definition of key, emergency essential, and mission essential positions is addressed.

DOD Directive Number 1200.7 and AR 690-11 define a KEY position as a Federal position that cannot be vacated during a national emergency or mobilization without seriously impairing the capability of the Federal agency or office to function effectively. Because of the essential nature of these positions, they may not be filled by Ready Reservists or military retirees with recall obligations. If the Ready Reservist must be retained in the key position, they must be transferred to Standby Reserve, Retired Reserve or be discharged, as appropriate under Section 271(b), Title 10 USC. However, reserve officers with a remaining military service obligation at the time of their removal from the Ready Reserve may be transferred only to the Standby Reserve, Active Status, under Section 1005, Title 10 USC. Military retirees assigned to occupy key positions must be exempted from recall or removed from the key position.

DOD Directive Number 1404.10 defines EMERGENCY ESSENTIAL (E-E) as a position-based designation to support the success of combat operations or to support combat-essential systems subsequent to mobilization, an evacuation order, or some other type of military crisis. These positions cannot be converted to military positions as they require uninterrupted performance to provide immediate and continuing support for combat operations and/or support maintenance and repair of combat essential systems. All civilian employees deploying to combat operations or crisis situations are considered E-E. These positions are typically located overseas or are positions that would require the incumbent to be transferred overseas during a crisis situation.

Through Presidential Directive, the Executive Branch of the Federal government is directed to be equipped and continue to perform essential functions during contingency operations, natural disasters, extreme weather situations or other emergency situations. These MISSION ESSENTIAL functions are existing functions that enable the Federal government to continue to provide the necessary, vital services during time of need and require great commitment of the

civilian employee. Employees occupying positions that are essential to Agency operations in closure situations are identified and designated by activity Commanders and Directors. Among these should also be employees that have unique or technical skills that are required by organizations for extended operations. There are no standard definitions or categories in regard to essential determinations; instead, they are based on the organization's unique mission requirements and/or circumstances and may even vary according to the particular nature of an exigency.

Key, emergency, or mission essential position designations are annotated in the position description and should be communicated well in advance to individuals occupying these positions and to those expected to report for work or remain on duty during extreme situations. In that regard, a signed statement of understanding acknowledging the position assignment is highly recommended in order to avoid employee misunderstanding or confusion. Employees who disagree with such an assignment must initially comply with the directive given, and may file an appeal or grievance afterwards, if appropriate.

When the installation's normal operations are interrupted by events beyond the control of Management (i.e. power failure, safety in road conditions, restrictions in transportation, etc.) or when it is in the public interest to close the installation, either on a partial or total basis, the Commanding General may issue an administrative dismissal order relieving employees from duty without charge to leave or loss of pay. During inclement weather crisis, the installation employs mass public media notifications via radio, television, and the [Fort Benning website](#) to inform personnel on safety conditions of roadways, as well as, any locally implemented procedures regarding delayed arrivals, early dismissals, and installation closure.

For additional information concerning Key, Emergency Essential, and Mission Essential personnel, or inclement weather procedures, contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist at the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.

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