

Department of Public Works and Engineering

Subject:	Departmental Policy No. 1-26
Emergency Response Policy	Effective: <b>Upon Approval</b>

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish structures, mechanisms, assignments and expectations to insure that the Department of Public Works and Engineering (PWE) can respond efficiently and effectively during a broad spectrum of emergencies, both natural and man-made. All PWE employees are critical to the operations of the department and the department is a first responder during emergencies. This policy describes the roles and responsibilities of PWE employees during the pre-event, intra-event and post-event periods of non-routine events.

**II. Scope**

This policy is applicable to all PWE employees regardless of civil service status, classification, pay grade or full or part time schedules. This policy replaces and supersedes all previous policies on this subject.

**III. Definitions**

Tier I: This category includes all personnel necessary for the continued operation of critical functions (i.e., water production, wastewater treatment, traffic control, etc.) and for special emergency preparedness and response functions (emergency operations and associated required support). These employees are expected to report as directed under any and all situations. These employees are considered essential during the pre-, intra- and post-event periods and are required to carry out the responsibilities assigned to Tier I employees in section V. Responsibilities.

Tier II: This category includes all personnel without immediate, specific emergency roles but who may be necessary to execute duties for the Department under certain circumstances. Tier II employees are considered essential during the pre-, intra- and post-event periods and are required to carry out the responsibilities assigned to Tier II employees in section V. Responsibilities.

Tier III: This category includes all remaining PWE personnel that are not specifically designated as Tier I or Tier II categories. Tier III employees are considered essential during the post-event period and are required to carry out the responsibilities assigned to Tier III employees in section V. Responsibilities.

Chain of Command: The line of authority and responsibility along which directions, instructions, authorizations and orders are passed. The chain of command typically begins with an employee's immediate supervisor, extends upward through all levels of management and ends with the Director of the Department of Public Works and Engineering.

**IV. Policy**

It is the policy of PWE to remain in a constant state of emergency preparedness to insure the delivery of critical public services and to stabilize and restore interrupted services. The Department will conduct damage mitigation with maximum efficiency and effectiveness with minimum risk to the general public, Department and City employees and other assets. The Department's Emergency

Approved:		Date Approved:	10/3/06	Page 1 of 4
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## Department of Public Works and Engineering

Response Plan may be activated by the Director in its entirety or in increments appropriate for the situation at hand.

### **V. Responsibilities**

PWE Director: In close collaboration with the Mayor, Homeland Security and other Department Directors, the PWE Director is responsible for determining that an event or incident has or may result in emergency conditions that involve the department, thereby setting into action the department's emergency plan.

Deputy Directors: Each Division of PWE will implement a division-specific policy and/or emergency response operation in order to execute the department's emergency plan and relay instructions, information, etc. to the employees. Deputy Directors will determine how their divisions are affected, must respond and will prescribe steps to stage, deploy and/or release employees for evacuation.

Managers/Supervisors (Assistant Directors, Deputy Assistant Directors, mid-level Management, first-line Managers and Supervisors, etc.): It is the responsibility of all divisional management, from first-line supervisors to Assistant Directors, to insure implementation of the Division's emergency response operation and to insure the safety and security of the employees, the public and city resources (equipment, vehicles, facilities, etc.) as much as possible. Supervisors and managers are responsible for collecting and maintaining current contact information for the department, their division, and branch and for their employees.

All Employees: All employees must know their assigned Tier status and understand their responsibilities related to their status. Each employee is responsible for knowing his/her chain of command during the incident and for contacting their supervisor during or after the incident, as required by the employee's Tier designation. It is the employee's responsibility to keep informed by checking the department's established means of communications (internet sites including the PWE website and alternatives, telephone, designated media outlets, etc.) in order to determine return to duty instructions and other information distributed concerning emergency response regardless of what is said or reported in the general media.

### **VI. Procedure**

All employees of the Public Works and Engineering Department will be designated by their divisions' Deputy Directors or designees as Tier I, Tier II or Tier III employees. These designations are based on the duties and responsibilities of the individual employee.

#### Tier I:

All Tier I personnel have specific duties to perform during preparation (if there is advance warning of the incident), during the actual incident and during the immediate post-incident period. Sufficient Tier I personnel will be identified, trained and deployed to maintain continuous (twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week) operations as required. Tier I employees working in around-the-clock operations will be rotated off duty for rest and meals as staffing permits. They will be paid for actual hours worked but not for rest or for meals before or after a shift. Every effort will be made to observe a "12 hours on, 12 hours off" rotation when staffing and conditions permit.

Subject: <b>Emergency Response Policy</b>	Departmental Policy No.:	Page 2 of 4
	Effective date: <b>Upon Approval</b>	

## Department of Public Works and Engineering

Tier I employees will be given city business time (paid time) in advance of the event, when there is time for an advance warning, to prepare themselves and to prepare or evacuate others for whom they are responsible. These employees may not be free to perform these duties during or in the immediate aftermath of the emergency.

Tier I employees' presence at their assigned posts is mandatory at the appointed time(s) and for required duration(s). Tier I employees may be assigned to their usual duty stations, to other duty stations, to designated rest areas (to prepare for the next assignment, as with round-the-clock shifts) or other locations as determined by the employees' supervisors/managers. Tier I employees are responsible for contacting the designated supervisor or manager in the chain of command if they are physically prevented by water, debris, ice, etc. from reaching their assigned posts and for securing alternative instructions. Failure to report and carry out assigned duties, in the absence of prior approvals from a Deputy Director, the Department Director or Director's designee, will result in disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

### Tier II:

All employees in pay grades 30 and above who have not been designated as Tier I employees are included in Tier II.

Tier II employees will be allowed to leave work when told by an authorized supervisor or manager in their chain of command prior to the commencement of the incident, when there is time for advance warning, in order to prepare themselves and to prepare or evacuate those for whom they are responsible. After such preparations are completed, Tier II employees will remain present and available for duty in the Houston area at a location of their choosing or at a designated city facility (at their election). Tier II employees who comply with this requirement are on standby status and, while on standby, will receive their usual base pay. Should a Tier II employee be activated, he or she will be compensated at his/her usual rate of pay, including overtime if appropriate. If a Tier II employee is called to duty and fails to report as directed or fails to perform as required in any other way, he or she will not be paid for the time missed, regardless of classification, will not be allowed to use benefit time to cover the time away from work and will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

Tier II employees are expected to be prepared to report when and where directed when instructed by their supervisor, manager or other authorized departmental official. Failure to report and carry out assigned duties, in the absence of prior approvals by the Deputy Director, Department Director or Director's designee, will result in disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

### Tier III:

Tier III personnel are to be released by an authorized supervisor or manager in their chain of command prior to the incident or event, when there is advance warning, to prepare for the incident. Their responsibility will be to follow incident response instructions given by the civil authorities (including evacuation). Once the incident is over, Tier III personnel are subject to recall to duty, including those employees who may have evacuated the area. This recall is independent of instructions issued by the civil authorities or reported by the general media for the population at-large to return to the city. Because of the city's responsibility and obligation to insure that infrastructure and critical services are repaired, restored, tested and/or inspected prior to the return of the general population, Tier III personnel are required to return when directed to report and to be available for any assignment necessary to insure efficient, effective and expedient cleanup of the aftermath.

Subject: <b>Emergency Response Policy</b>	Departmental Policy No.:	Page 3 of 4
	Effective date: <b>Upon Approval</b>	

## Department of Public Works and Engineering

In situations not requiring evacuation or in very localized incidents, Tier III employees not in affected areas are expected to report for duty unless otherwise instructed by their immediate supervisors or by department directives delivered via telephone, internet including the PWE website or official alternative website, or designated media outlets.

In the absence of an official directive concerning pay, Tier III employees who have performed as required may use accrued vacation, personal days, etc. to cover any absence from work during an event. If a Tier III employee is called to return to duty and fails to report as directed or fails to perform as required in any other way, he or she will not be paid for the time missed, regardless of classification, will not be allowed to use benefit time and will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

The department will not make logistical support plans or preparations for Tier III employees unless necessary, given prevailing conditions, when recalled to duty.

### Exceptions:

In extremely rare cases before, during or after an event, an employee may have a personal situation that precludes performance of the duties and responsibilities required by his or her Tier assignment.

Each Deputy Director is responsible for establishing a process by which advance review and approval for excuse from duty is handled.

### **VII. Compliance**

All personnel in the Public Works and Engineering Department will comply with this policy as well as related divisional, departmental and citywide policies. Failure to report and carry out assigned duties, in the absence of prior approvals, will result in disciplinary action up to and including indefinite suspension.

Subject: <b>Emergency Response Policy</b>	Departmental Policy No.:	Page 4 of 4
	Effective date: <b>Upon Approval</b>	