

**M E M O**



**County  
Administrator**

Robert W. Wilson  
701-241-5770  
wilsonro@casscountynd.gov

TO: Cass County Commissioners  
FROM: Robert W. Wilson  
DATE: February 8, 2021  
SUBJECT: Proposed Policy Amendment – 503 Emergency Closings

---

---

Sheriff Jahner and I have worked together on this item. The intent is to amend the way closure decisions for County facilities are made and communicated to staff and the public in the rare circumstances when an emergency closure is needed. Our intent is that the amended policy better reflects coordination and mutual responsibility between the Sheriff and the County Administrator for making and communicating closing decisions.

A copy of the proposed policy update is included for your review. Red stricken language represents current policy to be deleted. Blue underlined text is new language added to the policy. The amendment does change the emergency closure decision-making authority. However these decisions will continue to be collaborative efforts that often involve the Administrator, Sheriff, Commission Chair, Highway Engineer and Emergency Manager, depending on the difficulty or variety of the conditions in various parts of the County.

The practical intent of the policy change is that the Sheriff or his designee will be responsible for the public safety and public messaging related to closures and the Administrator will handle the internal, employee-focused communications.

Sheriff Jahner brought this item to my attention after a recent winter storm when he received considerable employee feedback about a closure decision. The Sheriff communicated to me – and I agree with him – these decisions are equal parts public safety and administrative issues. If an employee wants to question or provide feedback about the decision after the fact, that is at least as much an administrative matter as it is a matter of public safety.

The proposed policy amendment has been reviewed by Department Heads and reflects input from that group.

Please call me if you have questions.

**SUGGESTED MOTION:**

Move to amend Employee Handbook Section 503 Emergency Closings as presented by the County Administrator.

PO Box 2806  
211 Ninth Street South  
Fargo, North Dakota 58108

[www.casscountynd.gov](http://www.casscountynd.gov)

**503 Emergency Closings***Effective Date: 05/07/2018*

On occasion, we may close ~~down~~ for emergencies or extreme weather.

Unless an emergency closing is announced, we expect you to report to work in a timely manner and in accordance with applicable policies. In the event of inclement weather, use your own discretion in deciding whether you can commute safely to work. You should follow the call-in and notice procedures set forth by the Department.

**Decisions to Close and Communication**

In the event of hazardous weather or emergency closings, the ~~Sheriff or his designees~~ Administrator, in coordination with the Sheriff and County Commission Chair, may delay opening of County offices or announce an early closing. Where it appears that closure of County offices for the full day is prudent, the ~~Sheriff or his designee will contact at least two Commissioners, one of whom shall be the Chairman or Vice Chairman if available, and upon their concurrence, the Sheriff or his designee~~ Administrator, in coordination with the Sheriff and County Commission Chair, may close County offices. When the ~~Sheriff has~~ decision has been made to delay opening for the day, local media and employees will be notified by 6:30 a.m. ~~he shall notify local media prior to 6:30 a.m.~~ Information shall also be posted on the County website. You are responsible for obtaining the information regarding inclement weather and emergency closings. The County storm line phone number is 241-5880. Additional methods of communication will also be used.

For protection and safety reasons, you are not allowed to work at County offices during any periods of closure unless work has been approved by your Department Head.

**Leave Use and Compensation**

If we decide to close prior to the start of the workday, including for inclement weather, you will typically be paid for the day, except for hourly employees, who may use annual leave. If you were scheduled to be off, you will not be entitled to any change in compensation. ~~Where~~ If you are required to work and the County is closed, you may receive compensatory time, at the discretion of your Department Head.

Where the decision is made to close during the workday, you will receive full pay if you have worked all the hours the County was open during that day. Otherwise, you may be required to use annual leave. If the work day is less than five hours, no lunch breaks are allowed.

If we decide to stay open, but you choose not to work, you must use any annual leave. If you do not have annual leave available, you must take the day unpaid.