

FEMA Wave 2 Script 5

Anchor:

The Federal Government orders non-essential personnel to stay put.

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Hello. I'm Greg Gist, live from VNN headquarters in New York City. The Office of Personnel Management has just ordered all non-essential Federal government employees to stay home. Federal workers that were already at their desks were sent home and told not to return until instructed to. We have Casey Johnson from OPM here to explain. Casey, good afternoon.

OPM Spokesperson:

Good afternoon. As you stated, OPM has instructed all non-essential Federal employees to stay home until further notice. This will drastically reduce the number of commuters in both Washington, DC, New York City, and several major metropolitan centers across the nation.

Anchor:

What is the difference between an essential and a non-essential Federal employee?

OPM Spokesperson:

Simply, an essential employee is anyone who is designated as required to work when an office closing is authorized, usually in operations that must provide services around the clock.

The designation of essential can depend upon the employees' duties, as well as the circumstances for the closing. These include law enforcement personnel, medical staff, and investigators.

On the other hand, a non-essential employee is anyone who is not required to work when an office closing is authorized. Occasionally, non-essential employees may be required to work if skeleton crews must be maintained or if specific work must be performed to meet deadlines.

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We have been living through the pandemic for almost six months, why make this decision now?

OPM Spokesperson:

During a pandemic health crisis, heads of agencies will strive to protect the health of employees while ensuring the Federal Government's work is accomplished. Agencies may use a number of alternative work arrangements to

promote the “social distancing” of employees. An agency may authorize evacuation payments and require employees to work from home during a pandemic health crisis. In addition, an agency may require employees with approved telework agreements to telework from home. As all of these measures were exhausted, the Federal government felt that keeping non-essential employees at home might help decrease new infections.

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So, what are the essential services Americans can expect from the Federal government?

OPM Spokesperson:

There are quite a few, but the main ones include providing for the national security, including the conduct of foreign relations essential to the national security or the safety of life and property.

Americans can also count on their government to provide:

Medical care of inpatients and emergency outpatient care at VA hospitals across the country.

Air traffic control and other transportation safety functions.

Border and coastal protection and surveillance.

Care of prisoners and other persons in the custody of the United States.

Law enforcement and criminal investigations.

Emergency and disaster assistance.

Activities that ensure production of power and maintenance of the power distribution system

Activities essential to the preservation of the essential elements of the money and banking system of the United States.

Anchor:

Ms. Johnson, we thank you for your time today.

OPM Spokesperson:

Thank you for having me.

Anchor:

This just in. Health officials believe they are beginning to see a decline in the reports of flu activity. Millions of people have now been vaccinated and the tide begins to turn.

Stay tuned to VNN New York for breaking developments. I'm Greg Gist. We thank you for watching.