

Q1: What's an Admin Furlough?

A1: An administrative furlough is a planned event by an agency that is designed to absorb reductions necessitated by downsizing, reduced funding, lack of work, or any other budget situation other than a lapse in appropriations. Furloughs that would potentially result from sequestration would generally be considered administrative furloughs. If such furloughs are finally implemented, the SECARMY guidance/intent/plan is to furlough DA employees for 22 non-consecutive days taken one day per week; starting around April 21st and ending at the end of the Fiscal Year, i.e., September 30th. We have not received specific guidance or restrictions on scheduling the furlough days with the exception of that it must be for at least 8 hours per day, one day per week. This way we prevent a big financial impact on our employees, we can still manage our workload/services, and will prevent having to use Unemployment Insurance (as it will not save any money because DoD will end up paying for it). In terms of Unemployment Insurance, rest assured that if and/or when you become eligible for unemployment, you'll be notified promptly with specific info as required by law...if Maryland or the State you try to file a claim with, can't process your claim in that State, they'll assist you to file a Federal claim or an interstate claim.

Q2: What are the provisions for Unemployment in the State of Maryland?

A2: If a federal employee is subject to sequestration and is furloughed one or two days per week, the employee will not be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. The earnings for three or four days each week will disqualify the claimant from receiving any benefits. If a federal employee is subject to sequestration and is furloughed for three or more days in a week or is totally laid off, the individual must file a claim by calling an unemployment insurance claim center (410-949-0022 or 1-800-827-4839). The claim cannot be filed via the internet. If a federal employee voluntarily quits employment due to the sequestration, the individual will be disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits. An internet message has been placed on the MD UI home page providing the current sequestration information available:
<http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/unemployment.shtml>

Q3: If sequestration hits and furloughs are implemented, will Term Hires be let go before furloughs begin or will they be treated just like a permanent employee?

A3: It's a Command decision to terminate the Term employees...However, it's our understanding that most Commands have allowed for some Temps and/or Terms to remain in service until their expiration date...therefore, they'll be treated like any permanent employee, i.e., they'll be furlough in the same manner than the permanent employees (e.g., if this week a Perm and a Term have been scheduled to be furlough on Friday and management has designated 8 hours of furlough for that day, then both are furlough equally).

Q4: What is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

A4: Should you be experiencing any health problem or other personal problem, please feel free to discuss it with your supervisor or with the licensed Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Coordinator at COMM (301) 677-7981/7121 or DSN 622 to make a confidential EAP appointment or visit them in Building 2464. They are available to arrange for expert guidance and/or assistance in helping you with difficult personal issues that include, but are not limited to emotional, alcohol and drug-related, family and relationship, financial, and legal problems. The initial consultation or visit with the EAP is not charged to your leave and it's considered your official duty station/hour; however, you must coordinate that time with your supervisor. Or if you wish, your supervisor will be glad to make the appointment for you. Any assistance will be held in strict confidence and no information can be released without your consent. You may also access the EAP info website at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/permis/591.html> or http://archive.opm.gov/employment_and_benefits/worklife/healthwellness/eap/#

Q5: Is there a civilian version of the military Army Emergency Relief Fund (AERF)?

A5: There is an organization equivalent to the military AERF that offers similar relief to federal employees. It is the Federal Employees Education and Assistance Fund (FEEA). FEEA is known for its scholarships for family members of federal employees, but it also offers emergency monetary assistance to federal employees who qualify. Please visit <http://www.feea.org/> for further information.

In addition to EAP services, we also offer assistance (to ID/CAC card holders) through the Army Community Services - Financial Readiness Program. This program supports financial readiness by offering education and counseling. Emphasis is placed on skills such as money management techniques, proper use of credit, financial planning and budgeting. To schedule an individual appointment or coordinate a presentation in your Unit, please call COMM (301) 677-5590 or DSN 622. Also, employees may want to contact their financial institution, tax advisors, credit union or learn about their options through the Thrift Savings Plan (<http://www.tsp.gov>). Another available program is the Making Home Affordable. This is an official program of the Departments of the Treasury & Housing and Urban Development that helps homeowners avoid foreclosure, lower their monthly mortgage payments and provide options during unemployment or reduction in salary. Please call 1-888-995-HOPE (4673) or visit: <http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov/pages/default.aspx>

Q6: May an employee take paid leave or other forms of paid time off (e.g., annual, sick, court, or MILITARY LEAVE, leave for bone marrow or organ donor leave, credit hours earned, any compensatory time off earned, or time off awards) instead of taking administrative furlough time off?

A6: No. During an administrative furlough, an employee may not substitute paid leave or other forms of paid time off for any hours or days designated as furlough time off.

Q7: What happens to training, e.g., CES resident courses?

A7: Since the entire DoD workforce will be impacted and agencies typically have sufficient time to give employees adequate notice and to plan for administrative furloughs, furlough time off may be scheduled so as not to conflict with scheduled training, i.e., lasting less than 4 days (to include travel time) as their furlough time can be planned within the same pay period/week. However, in the event that scheduled training occurs during a furlough period (lasting longer than 4-days), affected employees must be placed in a furlough status and ordered not to attend the scheduled training. However, you must always check with your immediate supervisor and the school/activity offering the training.

Q8: Can employees be furloughed on Federal holidays?

A8: Yes. Employees may be furloughed for periods of time that include Federal holidays. However, an agency should not designate their furlough time the days before and after the Holiday. They should select the furlough days off on programmatic and administrative grounds that are unrelated to the fact that the period includes a holiday. For example, an agency may not properly furlough employees for a 3-day period, the middle of which is a holiday, for the sole purpose of saving 3 days' pay while losing only 2 days of work. Nor would it be proper to furlough an employee solely on a holiday.

Q9: If employees have a designated administrative furlough day off on the last workday before a holiday or the first workday after a holiday (but not on both days), will they be paid for the holiday?

A9: Yes. The general rule is that an employee is entitled to pay for a holiday so long as he or she is in a pay status on either the workday preceding a holiday or the workday following a holiday. The employee is paid for the holiday based on the presumption that, but for the holiday, the employee would have worked. (Note: A holiday should not be the first or last day of the period covered by a furlough.)

Q10: If employees have a designated administrative furlough day off on the last workday before a holiday and the first workday after a holiday, will they be paid for the holiday?

A10: No. If a furlough includes both the last workday before the holiday and the first workday after the holiday, the employee is not entitled to pay for the holiday because there is no longer a presumption that, but for the holiday, the employee would have worked on that day. (See Comptroller General opinion B-224619, August 17, 1987.) Agencies that allow employees to choose their furlough days off should explain that the employee will not be paid for the holiday if the employee chooses to take a furlough day off both before and after the holiday.

Q11: Furlough time off is treated like regular leave without pay (LWOP) for leave accrual and benefit purposes. The first 30 calendar days of each non-pay

period are creditable service. Therefore, many benefits will not be affected since furlough is currently being scheduled for less than 30 days. However, there are two areas that might be minimally impacted:

A11a: Accrual of annual and sick leave - Bottomline: Once an employee's balance of non-pay hours equals their scheduled hours in a pay period (e.g., 80 hours in a biweekly pay period, fewer hours for part-time employees), the employee will not accrue leave for that pay period. Leave accrual resumes the next pay period. This will occur twice if the furlough period is 22 days. For example: When you reach your 10th and 20th day of furlough (approx. on 30 JUN and 8 SEP) you will not accrue leave on those pay periods but will resume the following pay period. The accumulation of non-pay status hours during a leave year can affect the accrual of annual leave and sick leave. (See 5 CFR 630.208(a).) For example, when a full-time employee with an 80-hour biweekly tour of duty accumulates a total of 80 hours of non-pay status from the beginning of the leave year (either in one pay period, or over the course of several pay periods), the employee will not earn annual and sick leave in the pay period in which that 80-hour accumulation is reached. If the employee again accumulates 80 hours of non-pay status, he or she will again not earn leave in the pay period in which that new 80-hour total is reached. (This means that a full-time employee who is in the 6-hour annual leave accrual category and who has accumulated 80 hours of non-pay status in the last pay period of the year will forfeit 10 hours of leave accrual in that pay period.) At the end of the leave year, any accumulation of non-pay status hours of less than 80 hours is zeroed out so that the accumulation for the next leave year starts at zero. For part-time employees, leave accrual is prorated based on hours in a pay status in each pay period; thus, time in non-pay status reduces leave accrual in each pay period containing such time (5 CFR 630.303 and 5 U.S.C. 6307).

A11b: Within Grade Increases (WGI) - An aggregate of no more than 2 workweeks in a non-pay status in a waiting period is creditable service for advancement to steps 2, 3, and 4 of the General Schedule; 4 workweeks for advancement to steps 5, 6, and 7; and 6 workweeks for advancement to steps 8, 9, and 10 [5 CFR 531.406(b)]. For prevailing rate employees (WG, WL, and WS schedules), an aggregate of 1 workweek non-pay status is creditable service for advancement to step 2, 3 workweeks for advancement to step 3, and 4 workweeks for advancement to steps 4 and 5 [5 CFR 532.417(c)].

Q12: Are there any plans to provide specific guidance for restoration of annual leave due to the potential inability to use all use or lose prior to the end of the leave year?

A12: Currently there's no provision in the law for such, only if such was due to an admin error, exigency of the public business, sickness, or national emergency by reason of certain terrorist attacks [5 U.S.C. 6304(d) and (e) or 5 CFR 630.305-311]...however, there's plenty of time to schedule leave or incorporate the office's leave with your furlough schedule...if, by approx. 27 NOV 13, the Agency has an exigency and requires of your services and cancels your leave or you meet one of the provisions aforementioned, then the Commander could grant such restoration.

Q13: Can I cancel and later re-enroll or make changes to my Health Insurance during the period of furlough?

A13: No. Changes can only be made during Open Seasons (usually end of November and beginning of December) or due to certain events, called qualifying life events (QLEs). The most common QLEs for changing enrollment type or plan are: marriage, acquiring a child, moving away from the area served by your Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), losing health insurance coverage, or changing employment status. See the following website: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/reference-materials/reference/enrollment/> However, your coverage will continue uninterrupted.

Q14: Can I temporary cancel, stop or withdraw my Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)?

A14: Yes. However, there could be some serious implications and it's strongly suggested that you carefully review the TSP info...please visit: <https://www.tsp.gov/planparticipation/inservicewithdrawals/financialHardship.shtml>

Q15: Where can I find the latest info on furlough?

A15: Please visit the following websites:

- DA: <http://cpol.army.mil/library/general/2013sequestration/>
- DoD: [http://www.cpms.osd.mil/Content/Documents/2013%20DOD%20Administrative%20Furlough%20FAQs%20\(Update%2005-Mar\).pdf](http://www.cpms.osd.mil/Content/Documents/2013%20DOD%20Administrative%20Furlough%20FAQs%20(Update%2005-Mar).pdf)
- OPM: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/#url=Overview>
- Fort Meade: <http://www.ftmeade.army.mil/faqs/sequestration.html>

Hope this has clarified some of the concerns about furlough...

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