THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

Community Comments Previously Submitted Regarding an Approved Administrative Policy

Policy on Adverse Weather and Other Emergencies (01.110.3)

The University of Rhode Island's *Policy on Adverse Weather and Other Emergencies* (01.110.3) was approved with an effective date of August 21, 2026. Prior to approval, the draft policy was made available for community comments from May 27 through June 16, 2026. Below are the comments submitted, together with responses that may have been provided in whole or in part by the policy owner, the Administrative Policy Committee (APC), and/or policy development staff.

Prior community comments and corresponding responses relating to approved administrative policies are posted for 30 days following approval on the University's Administrative Policy Development web page (https://web.uri.edu/policies/administrative-development/). Following this posting period, submitted comments remain available upon request by contacting policies-group@uri.edu.

Comment #	Respondent's Capacity	Community Comment	Response
1	Staff	During the April 22, 2026, meeting, the Accessibility Task Force recommended adding language noting that "it is the responsibility of the department or owner to clean department vehicles following adverse weather events."	This is outside the scope of the policy. A *Policy on Fleet Vehicle Management* and related procedures are under development, which may present a better fit for such content. The Office of Equal Opportunity's *Adverse Weather Accessibility Guidelines* can be amended to reflect this responsibility.
2	Staff	1) This policy needs more clarification regarding compensation and prescheduled time-off during a URI Emergency. I presented arguments about the lack of clarity of this policy during the recent blizzard, ultimately being forced to use Vacation even though URI was closed for Emergency (URI was closed beyond the dates the state was closed, so we would be looking at just this policy, not the DOA policy) because it was "pre-requested/pre-planned" time off. The DOA policy specifically states: "4(g.) Employee [sic] who have pre-requested/pre-planned/management pre-approved leave hours scheduled within the regular standard work shift during the hours of state office closure stand as scheduled. Administrative Leave is not credited." The URI policy does not say anything similar, but I was still required to use Vacation. If this is the policy of URI (which is how it was applied to me), it should be stated in the policy. Rather the URI policy simply states that employees will	Thank you for noting this. We have clarified this by adding to the section on 'Compensation' (Section III): *Employees with pre-approved leave hours scheduled within their standard work shift during the hours of a declared Emergency shall proceed with that leave as planned; with such leave charged to the Employee's leave balance (not credited as administrative leave).* We have revised the section on 'Remote Work' (Section V) to add: *An Employee who is not required by their supervisor to work during an emergency*

		continue to be compensated if the university curtails operations. This is unclear. 2) Under the Remote Work section -I think it should be clarified / contemplated under this section regarding employees who already have RWAs in place and what they need/need not do. 3) Suggest that iterations of "shall" should be changed to must.	*shall not receive additional compensation for voluntary work performed.*
3	Staff	Today is my last work day with URI but I am compelled to comment nonetheless. I have worked in Facilities Operations for 5 1/2 years. The advertisement for my position did not refer to the role as being "essential." The interview committee did not refer to the role as being essential. The offer letter did not refer to the role as being essential. In fact, I didn't find out until the first snow storm that triggered the "essential personnel must report" notification that I was considered essential. Therefore, I would ask that this policy or another HR policy incorporate a requirement that position advertisements, interviews, and offer letters include a reference to the essential nature of the role and in addition to that describe what that looks like during these events. One of the reasons I chose a role at URI vs. elsewhere was because I needed to be closer to home to ease my own burden in caring for my ailing, elderly father. Had the position advertisement included a reference to "essential" and the nature of that reference, I would not have applied for, interviewed for, or accepted the job. People must be able to make employment decisions based on full transparency of the job's requirements. They can't do that when requirements such as these are hidden from view.	Thank you for your comment. We will evaluate this as part of the recruitment process and policy.
4	Staff	I would add blizzards/snow storms after "1) natural disasters such as a floods, earthquakes, hurricanes" before "or similar events" in the definitions, as the 2026 edits to this policy are directly in relation to the blizzard in February 2026, and as written, blizzards/snow storms are not clearly identified in the policy- this could lead to confusion especially with out-of-state employees and students that may see lesser impacts but be uncertain if they can or should travel to campus. Additionally, I would consider adding extreme heat or cold events, as there are impacts from both that heavily impact the ability of students, faculty and staff to safely navigate the campus, its infrastructures and state & surrounding communities.	We've added 'blizzard' to the list of examples of natural disasters. The definition already refers to adverse weather. Related communications are intended to inform employees if an emergency condition is impacting a URI campus. We did not list temperature extremes as a specifically cited example.

5	Staff	Add a New Section dedicated to outlining: “Accessibility Requirements During Emergencies” and a protocol for ensuring them in as structured a manner as possible, so that all parties are clear. A. Communications Ensure all emergency notifications are provided in accessible formats, including captioned video, screen-reader-compatible text, and plain-language versions. Ensure simultaneous release of accessible communications so disabled students and employees receive information at the same time as others. Add to Section VIII (Communications) All emergency communications must meet accessibility standards including captioning, screen-reader compatibility, and alternative formats. Plain-language summaries should accompany complex emergency communications. Emergency plans/safety info communicated to HRL/Staff/Students impacted B. Physical Accessibility Considerations/Ongoing Maintain accessible routes and access points during adverse weather and after (melting/refreezing/plowing) on an ongoing basis whenever possible, including, but not limited to snow/ice removal from ramps, curb cuts, and priority pathways. Prioritize accessible building entrances for clearing first, and ongoing maintenance while snow/ice remains. Add to Section III–IV (Class Cancellation & Alternative Delivery) Alternative delivery modes must remain accessible, including captioning, accessible documents, and LMS compatibility. Faculty must follow accessibility guidelines when shifting to remote or asynchronous instruction. Add to Section VI (Expectations to Report) Employees with disabilities may request temporary modifications to reporting expectations during emergencies if weather or conditions create disability-related barriers. Supervisors must consider reasonable accommodations before requiring on-site reporting. C. Remote Work and Academic Access	All university programs, services, and activities remain subject to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, including during emergency situations. As a result, accessibility requirements continue to apply regardless of operational circumstances. The recommendation to include additional language regarding standard business practices may be unnecessary, as these obligations are already addressed through existing institutional practices. For questions related to accessibility compliance or to report a concern regarding an accommodation, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity.

		Ensure remote work decisions consider disability-related needs, including assistive technology, captioning, and ergonomic accommodations. Ensure alternative course delivery remains accessible (captioning, alt-text, accessible PDFs, LMS compatibility). Add to Section VII (Remote Work) Remote work decisions must not disadvantage employees with disabilities who rely on assistive technology or modified workspaces. Supervisors must ensure accessibility of remote platforms used during emergencies. D. Service Animal and Personal Care Considerations Ensure continuity of access for service animals and personal care attendants during campus weather events. E. Emergency Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place Ensure evacuation procedures include plans for individuals with mobility, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. Ensure shelter-in-place locations are physically accessible and clearly communicated. Add to Section II (University Operations During an Emergency) Emergency decisions must consider disability impact including mobility, sensory, and medical needs. Consultation with DAI, HR, HRL, etc… may be necessary/is required when adverse weather events affect access to buildings, transportation, or academic continuity in an ongoing manner.	