

**PHYSICAL PLANT**  
**OPERATING POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**PP/OP 03.03:** Physical Plant Attendance Policy/Procedures

**DATE:** July 17, 2008

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Physical Plant operating policy/procedure (PP/OP) is to define Physical Plant's attendance policy, and provide supervisors and employees with a clear description of attendance standards and applicability in regard to job performance. In establishing the standards for attendance, Physical Plant can effectively and efficiently meet the business needs of the division as well as provide employees the leaves to which they are entitled.

**REVIEW**

This PP/OP will be reviewed in October of every four years by the manager – physical plant human resources with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the managing director – physical plant.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE**

1. General

- a. This PP/OP is applicable to all employees of Physical Plant. This includes BMC, Utilities, Warehouse/Department Supply/Purchasing, Custodial Services and Transportation, Engineering Services, Information Services, Fleet Management and Safety, MailTech, Financial Services/Business Office, Planning and Training, and Human Resources.
- b. Each Physical Plant employee has a significant role in accomplishing a large, complex mission and must be present at the workplace to fulfill that role.  
Absences cause:
  - (1) Work delays or stoppage,
  - (2) Disrupted work schedules,
  - (3) Damage to customer relationships,
  - (4) Lost revenue and cost increases, and/or
  - (5) Inconvenience and additional workload for other employees.
- c. Good attendance is a sign of an employee's attitude and enthusiasm toward his/her job and a key indicator of individual performance levels. Attendance is one of the factors that will be considered in preparing performance appraisals, recommending awards, merit pay increases, etc.

- d. This PP/OP establishes the policy to be followed by all Physical Plant employees for requesting and coordinating absences and dealing with scheduled and unscheduled lost production time absences. Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the University's progressive discipline program (TTU OP 70.31). Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, oral counselings and reprimands; written counselings and reprimands; suspension (leave without pay); and dismissal.
- e. In the event of a conflict between Physical Plant records and sick leave/vacation balances maintained by the university personnel office, the university system will have priority. The TTU system is the official "system of record" and will be considered final in the absence of specific documentation showing an error.
- f. This operating policy is intended to supplement NOT replace TTU OP 70.01 and must be used in conjunction with it. In the event of conflicts between this policy and TTU OP 70.01, the guidance in the TTU OP will be followed.

## 2. Standard Definitions

- a. Absence: Any period of continuous absence for the same reason.
- b. Scheduled Absence: Any absences approved in advance. Advance is defined as a minimum of 23 clock hours prior to the time absence is being taken. Examples may be found on page 4, paragraph b. (2).
- c. Unscheduled Absence: Any absence not approved by an employee's supervisor in advance of the 23-clock hour minimum. These absences will count as Lost Production Time.
- d. Absence Without Notification: Failure to notify (or cause to have notified) the appropriate supervisor of intent to be absent prior to the official start time established in each section of the Physical Plant.
- e. Tardy: Any failure to report or return to work at the established times. Tardy instances will be documented if the time is 7 ½ minutes or less and no time will be charged to any leave balance. Longer tardy instances will be documented AND charged to vacation, sick leave, or leave without pay as applicable. These absences will count as Lost Production Time.
- f. Job Abandonment (Assumed Resignation): Any failure to contact the appropriate supervisor for a period of five (5) working days will result in Job Abandonment. At the end of the 5-day period, the employee will be terminated from employment.

### 3. Types Of Leave

a. Sick Leave: Sick leave is provided specifically and solely for use during illness/injury on the part of the employee or an immediate family member. It may not be used as a substitute for additional vacation time. Malingering and other abuses of sick leave may constitute grounds for dismissal from employment (TTU OP 70.01, p. 6, 3. o.) All employees are encouraged to conserve sick leave and accumulate as much as possible to avoid an interruption to income in case serious illness or injury results in an extended absence from work.

- (1) Immediate Family Member is defined as an individual residing in the employee's household and related by kinship, adoption, or marriage (common-law is allowed, but the employee must have acknowledged the opposite-sex partner as "wife" or "husband" when referring to him/her prior to the request). Foster child(ren) certified by Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, or minor child(ren) whether or not living with the employee are also included.
- (2) "An employee's use of sick leave for family members not residing in the employee's household is strictly limited to the time necessary to provide care and assistance to a spouse, child (minor or adult), or parent of the employee who needs such care and assistance as a direct result of a documented medical condition." (70.01, 3. e. (3))
- (3) To be eligible for accumulated sick leave with pay during a continuous period of more than three working days, employees must bring/send their supervisor a doctor's certificate showing the cause or nature of the illness, or some other written statement of the facts concerning the illness that is acceptable to the supervisor.

The supervisor may require an employee to supply a doctor's certification or other statement for an absence of three (3) or fewer days. This requirement must be documented in some type of disciplinary action letter to the individual with specific reasons for the action spelled out. Actions of this type are more likely if a pattern of abuse is indicated, i.e. several Friday/Mondays, payday or the day after payday with frequent occurrences in a row, several individuals in the same section calling in sick on the same day, etc...

b. Vacation (Annual) Leave

- (1) Employees are encouraged to schedule vacations in advance. Two weeks or more prior to the requested leave is preferable advance notice. (TTUOP 70.01)

- (2) Normally vacation time requests will be approved based on the preference of the employee. HOWEVER, with sufficient justification based on department needs, the administrative officer has the right to disapprove a request or cancel a previously approved vacation leave.

The supervisor will clearly explain the operational necessity of the disapproval or cancellation of previously approved time. S/he will also work with the employee to ensure that time is afforded the employee to take leave.

c. Leave Without Pay

- (1) Employees are not entitled to absences in excess of normal accruals.
- (2) In accordance with university policy, once accrued vacation and sick leave are exhausted, further absences will be noted as leave without pay. An employee who uses all available accrued leave and continues to miss work will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis in the event of serious injury or illness requiring extended absence. Provisions for this type leave are covered by Family Medical Leave (FMLA) and the University's sick leave pool. Criteria described in TTU OPs 70.32 and 70.01 respectively must be met to determine eligibility.

- d. For additional types of leave and the requirements associated with them, refer to Texas Tech University Operating Policy 70.01. This and other TTU OPs are available in the Human Resources Office, the Texas Tech Library, and the University's Web site (TTU OP Site) for employees' information and use.

4. Employee Requirements

- a. Employees are expected to report to work every day, on time and prepared to work, unless an absence has been scheduled and approved by the supervisor. Missing work without prior approval will be considered an unscheduled lost production time absence and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- b. Employees are expected to schedule all leave(s) in advance.
  - (1) In order for an absence to be considered scheduled, an employee must notify his/her immediate supervisor at least 23 clock hours in advance of the absence.
  - (2) The notification must be provided during normal working hours as established for each section, Monday through Friday (excluding holidays).

EXAMPLE: An employee who wants to take off on Tuesday must notify his/her supervisor not later than 9:00 AM Monday morning. If the Monday proceeding the desired day off is a holiday, the notification must be submitted not later than 9:00 AM the proceeding Friday. Similarly, an employee who desires to take a day off on a Monday must notify the supervisor by 9:00 AM the previous Friday.

- c. Employees must be aware that they are not entitled to absences in excess of normal accruals. Additionally, an excessive number of scheduled absences may be subject to disciplinary action under the University's progressive discipline program. Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, oral counselings and reprimands; written counselings and reprimands; suspension (leave without pay); and dismissal.
- d. Unscheduled lost production time will drop off at the end of a 12-month period. For example: An employee who receives a lost production time occasion on May 1, 2008 will have that occasion removed from his/her record on May 1, 2009.

#### 5. Supervisor Requirements

- a. The Texas Legislature has established vacation and sick leave accruals by state employees as entitlements (unlike the private sector where they are considered benefits). Accordingly, requests for vacation or sick leave within the individual employee's accruals should not be disapproved without operational justification.

Supervisors may require that vacation leave be scheduled when most appropriate for mission accomplishment/workload (i.e.; to ensure employees are present during periods of heavy customer requirements, critical tasks, a surge in work load, etc.) and may approve, disapprove, or cancel vacation requests based on those operational requirements. However, employees are entitled to take their accrued vacation each year. If disapproving or canceling a leave request based on work-related reasons, the supervisor will clearly explain the operational requirements that make vacation infeasible at that time.

The supervisor will also make alternative arrangements with the employee to ensure that adequate opportunity for vacation is afforded. In an emergency with sufficient justification, the supervisor may cancel previously approved absences. These circumstances will be reviewed and acted upon by a section director on a case-by-case basis.

- b. Supervisors will document (or cause to have documented) the absences in the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) and on the paper time sheet, or as applicable within section procedures.

- c. Supervisors will identify and document the specific impact of repeated absences on daily operations and will counsel the employee on this impact. If a disciplinary leave without pay action or dismissal is requested, the supervisor must provide documentation identifying the adverse impact and show that the employee has been counseled. Documentation should include items such as:
- (1) Performance Evaluation indicating a decline in performance based on absences,
  - (2) Written letters of counseling, reprimand, or Disciplinary Leave Without Pay (Suspension), and/or
  - (3) Documents listing work delayed, stopped, reassigned, etc. because of the absent employee.

Because vacation and sick leave are entitlements, employees may not be disciplined for using accrued sick leave and vacation time unless a clear pattern of abuse is detected. This pattern may include repeatedly missing work on Friday/Monday, frequent absences when unpleasant or difficult work, shift work, etc. is scheduled, frequent unscheduled absences, and similar circumstances.

An employee is not entitled to an unlimited number of absences and even though absences are legitimate, they can still become excessive. Supervisors must be alert to the fact that excessive absences hamper work schedules of the Physical Plant work force.

In accordance with university policy, a sick leave absence of more than three (3) days will require a doctor's note. However, when there is a pattern of frequent absence, abuse of sick leave is suspected, or an employee has exhausted all accrued leave, the section may direct the employee through some type of written disciplinary action letter to obtain a doctor's note each time he/she is absent regardless of the length of the absence. Should the employee fail to produce the note, the absence may be charged as vacation or leave without pay.

Repeated failures to comply with management directives to provide doctor's (s') notes may be regarded as a disciplinary problem and subject to the progressive disciplinary system. Note that under these circumstances the employee is disciplined for failure to follow department or university policy and for failure to comply with management directives, **not** for having used any or all accrued vacation/sick leave.

#### 4. Unscheduled Lost Production and Resulting Disciplinary Action

- a. Employees may not be disciplined or discharged merely for missing work. The employer must show that the absence(s) resulted in an adverse impact on the organization and its customers. Examples include: work not accomplished or finished later than scheduled, or other employee's(s') work schedule(s) must be revised.
- b. Supervisors must identify the specific impact of repeated absences on daily operations and counsel the employee on this impact. If disciplinary leave without pay or dismissal is requested, the department must provide documentation identifying the adverse impact and show that the employee has been counseled.
- c. In order to ensure consistency among the various departments within Physical Plant, an objective system for evaluating lost productivity and initiating disciplinary action is necessary. The following criteria/procedures will be used within Physical Plant:
  - (1) An employee will be allowed up to 40 hours of unscheduled lost production time in any continuous (rolling) 12-month period before any disciplinary action is begun. After the initial 40 hours documentation, each subsequent 24 hours or three (3) separate events, which ever comes first, will require the supervisor to continue documenting in accordance with the University's disciplinary action guidelines and discuss the situation with the employee. Progressive disciplinary action may continue through dismissal **DEPENDING ON THE INDIVIDUAL CASE**. To ensure all state and federal laws are adhered to, each case will be fully reviewed prior to any adverse actions.
  - (2) Accrual of unscheduled lost production hours begins at the time an employee is expected to report to work and ends when the employee reports to work. Or if the employee does not appear at the end of normal business hours, the lost production time will continue until s/he does report to work. This procedure applies even if the employee calls in to his/her supervisor the same day to discuss the absence. However, accrual of unscheduled hours during a period of continuous absence will stop if an employee contacts his/her supervisor when the period specified for advance notice has been met.

Examples: 1. An employee is required to provide 23 clock hours notice for a scheduled absence. An hour before work begins the individual calls his supervisor and states he will not be at work that day or for the following two (2) days (a total of three days). Accrual of unscheduled lost production time starts at the beginning of normal working hours. He will accrue a full day/shift of unscheduled hours for that day. The remaining two (2) days will be scheduled.

Example 2: In the example above the employee has called the supervisor immediately prior to the first day of the absence letting him/her know that s/he will miss the first day and also the second day. As indicated above, the first day will accrue as unscheduled lost production hours, but the second day will **not** because the amount of time required for advance notice (23 clock hours prior to the start of the shift in this example) has been met. Should the employee need to be absent the third day, s/he must call on the second day prior to 9:00 a.m. for it to be scheduled.

Example 3: An individual is required to provide 23 clock hours advance notice for a scheduled absence. An hour after work starts s/he calls in and advises his/her supervisor s/he will not be in on time. S/he shows up for work 4 hours after normal start of work. 4 hours of unscheduled lost production time will be accrued. (Note: S/he may also be subject to disciplinary action for failing to notify the supervisor of an absence prior to the start of work).

Each employee who calls in or has someone call in for the employee to report an absence must give one specific reason, a specific date, and a specific amount of time the absence will require. If no specific information is provided, the supervisor or custodial office staff will believe that the employee will return to work the next workday. Scheduling an absence while at work will also require a specific reason, date, and amount of time needed.

- (3) An employee who is tardy/late for work will be charged unscheduled lost production time in accordance with the number of hours missed. Any hour or part of an hour late will be charged as one whole hour of unscheduled lost production time. For example, an individual who is five (5) minutes late will be charged for one (1) full hour of lost production time. Someone who is one hour and five (5) minutes late will be charged for two (2) hours of lost production time. Individuals who are repeatedly late will be counseled and subject to disciplinary action prior to exhausting the full 40 hours of unscheduled lost production time if it is determined their frequent tardiness is having an adverse impact on productivity. In this case supervisors must quantify and document the impact on productivity and on customers when instituting/requesting disciplinary action.

In addition to the lost production time accrued, employees who are tardy/late for work more than 7 ½ minutes will be charged vacation, sick, or leave without pay depending on circumstances associated with a tardy and leave balances available. Applicable time will be charged in one-quarter (¼) hour (15 minute) increments in an amount sufficient to ensure accountability for the entire tardy period. Tardy instances for a period of less than 7 ½ minutes will be documented only but will still be charged the one (1) hour lost production time.



Example: If an employee is 20 minutes tardy, 15 minutes would be charged to LWOP, sick, or vacation as applicable. If the employee were 25 minutes tardy, 30 minutes would be charged. LWOP will be used when sick and vacation balances are at zero.

b. Physical Plant recognizes the possibility that unpredictable absences may occur for valid reasons that are beyond the control of the employee. There are two circumstances that affect accrual of lost production time:

- (1) In the case of a death in the immediate family, as defined in TTU OP 70.01, no lost production time will be accrued. Employees are required to notify their supervisor of the absence and the reason as soon as practicable under the circumstances.
- (2) If an employee or a member of the employee's immediate family is hospitalized and is incapacitated, i.e., physically unable to call/notify the supervisor, no lost production time will accrue regardless of the length of the absence if the employee provides a doctor's note or hospital documentation upon his/her return. Again, employees are asked to notify the supervisor as soon as circumstances permit. (Applicable to any emergency hospitalization or delivery following pregnancy.)

These are the only two instances that affect accrual of lost production time.  
ABSENCE FOR ANY OTHER REASON WILL RESULT IN ACCRUAL OF  
LOST PRODUCTION TIME IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS PP/OP.

## 6. Reporting and Recording Absences

The Physical Plant Progressive Discipline system applies to absences. Supervisors are the key to successful implementation of this policy and are responsible for reporting the attendance and absences of each employee under his/her supervision.

- (1) Reporting leave for Monthly Non-exempt and Hourly non-exempt employees will be accomplished by the supervisor or designee entering each absence into the HRMS with corresponding information entered on the applicable Report of Hours Worked (time sheet).
- (2) Professional & Administrative (P&A) and Classified Exempt employees will use the *Texas Tech Application for Leave* form to record absences of any type. Forms may be retrieved and printed from: [www.ttu.edu](http://www.ttu.edu); select Faculty & Staff, Personnel, Forms and Procedures, and Application for Leave and print "all" or only the applicable month. Copies are also available in Physical Plant HR Office, Room 105. These forms should reflect all the leave taken in the applicable month and submitted with appropriate signatures at the end of each month. The supervisor or designee will enter the corresponding information into the HRMS.

When an employee requests an absence, the appropriate supervisor(s) will approve or disapprove the request and forward approved requests to the next higher supervisor. The highest-level supervisor will forward the form to the HR office. HR will forward the form to the Records Office within Drane Hall Personnel. Records staff will process the information in the TecHris system. No annotated forms will be returned to the department therefore copies of the leave request must be made before it leaves the Physical Plant. HR will make a copy to be filed in the individual's personnel folder. If the individual wants a copy it must be made before submission to the HR office.

Each director or associate director may determine internal section processes relating to the above process as needed as long as all the information is captured correctly and provided to the HR office.

7. Job Abandonment or Assumed Resignation

If any employee fails to notify (or cause to have notified) their supervisor for a period of five (5) working days, the employee will be terminated from their employment with the university.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>MONTH</u>
Manager for Physical Plant Human Resources	Review	Oct (Every Four Years)
Approved: _____ Reviewer		
Approved: _____ Managing Director for Physical Plant		