

## Items for consideration in case of:

### Federal Shutdown

### Natural Disaster

### Fire, Flood or other Emergency

**(This guide will remain draft for now and will be revised as Districts offer additional information that should be included)**

**Communication:** *in the event of a government shutdown, government phones, computers or other communication devices may not be available by policy or not working in a fire other natural disaster.*

1. **Board**, determine beforehand who should be the point of contact- most likely the Board Chair
2. **Board**, does the NRCS DC or contact have personal phone, cell and/or email communication information on the Board prior to an event?
3. **NRCS DC, or contact**, does the Board contact and District staff have your personal phone, cell and/or email for contact as an event happens or during that event if federal office phone, cell or computer is unavailable for us?
4. **District staff**, does the Board contact have personal contact information for you outside the office? Does the NRCS contact have personal contact information for you?
5. Can another phone, cell phone and/or email address be identified for use in an event? (*see alternate workspace for more information*)

*Some of these items will also apply for non-federal work space offices and especially for the NRCS contact to communicate to the Board or staff on what is happening and will also apply in natural disaster or other emergency.*

**Alternate Work Space:** *if the federal office is unavailable and/or another disruptive event in non-federal space happens.*

1. Can alternate space be identified with the county, other state agency or with the city that could be used in an emergency situation?
2. Can a non-published phone number for this entity be designated as a number that can be used during an event? This could be a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> line for an agency or county office that doesn't normally get direct calls on that number and could be used. However, do consider limited or no use of this line for long distance calls.

3. Is it possible for the District to purchase a cell phone for communication that can be used by the District staff during the year but also available for an emergency purpose? Could this be a reasonable request to the county for an increase in District financial support? District and staff need to consider internet accessibility.

**Communicating with the public during a federal shutdown or other event:**

1. Make sure voicemail machines have any identified phone number or email address stated on greeting message before shutdown of office if possible.
2. Make sure any contact information is prominently displayed on the office door or in other appropriate places during the event.
3. Prepare for other outlets for information to the public including public service announcements, posted on message boards at local establishments frequented by likely customers, similar postings at the courthouse and make certain common offices such as the Extension Office has the temporary office information.

**Plan for access to appropriate information, equipment or tools during an event:**

1. **Board**, make certain there is an understanding with NRCS on what customer files are available or how they would be accessed during an event. Remember, conservation plans are the property of the District. Federal program contracts containing sensitive Personal Identifiable Information are not available without federal supervision.
2. **Board/District staff**, is District owned computers, survey equipment; educational materials clearly labeled and a completed plan in place to secure these items outside the office should an event occur? This also means the equipment or files are also in a secure location.
3. **Board/District Staff**, does the District own a computer used in the federal office? If so, can it be moved to an alternate location if needed? Additionally, are District files being backed up if there is a computer failure and to have available for use at an alternative work site? If District files; minutes, financial reports, letters, educational items or other District files; are not backed up, consider an inexpensive external hard drive or thumb drive to ensure files are secure and usable in event of a fire, flood or government shutdown.
4. **Board/District Staff**, if District files exist on a federal computer, make certain appropriate IT rules are followed for any external storage attachment is approved and only copy District owned files are stored on this device.

**Transportation issues:** *In the event of a federal shutdown, federally provided vehicles are not available and should never be used by District staff during that shutdown.*

1. **Board**, have you discussed with the District staff the use of a personal vehicle? Are there issues with the staff person's personal auto insurance that may not cover them if using for work related activities? Does the District Personnel Policy, if available (*TACD has a generic version if needed*), cover any of these issues including appropriate compensation for the use of the vehicle.
2. Board/Staff, is it possible the county/city may have an excess vehicle that could be used in an event?

**Program issues-federal, state and other:**

1. In the event of a federal shutdown, federal programs should not be serviced during that shutdown and will need to wait for the federal employees to return.
2. State programs can be a bit tough to make a call on because most of these activities are installed according to federal standards. The Memorandum of Understanding the District has with USDA provides for assistance to the District from the federal agency including technical assistance. If the practice requires significant technical detail, engineering or other services normally provided by the federal NRCS employee, it should probably also wait for the federal employee to return. We should work closely with the TDA Watershed Coordinators on these issues and make certain actions are taken that would not put the District in legal harm's way.

**Understanding of District Role**

1. Does the Board and Staff understand they are still fully functional and their responsibility under state law is still in effect during a federal shutdown? (*TACD can provide assistance if there is a misunderstanding.*) (*There likely would be a shutdown of the District if a state shutdown was initiated. The timing of funding and the status of District staff if paid by the county. A couple of states have dealt with this over the last couple years and, though unlikely, TACD will seek guidance on our status during such an event.*)
2. Is the County and other local authorities fully informed and understand the District role and exist as a local entity of state government? (*we have discussed and had completed some work on an agreement between the District and the County to provide better understanding of the role Districts play. This would be similar to the Memorandum of Understanding with USDA and help remove the fairly common thought that Districts are federal.*)

**TACD roles:**

1. Other than the items mentioned above, TACD will look into a communication alternative during a statewide event that communicates through the [www.tnacd.org](http://www.tnacd.org) website, utilizes TCDEA's "myfamily" system or establishes an alternative for Association communication.
2. TACD will continue to work with Districts, partners and others to improve this process to better assist our member Districts should a shutdown or other event occur in the future.

DRAFT

## AD HOC COMMITTEES

### FEDERAL SHUTDOWN PROCEDURES

*Committee was appointed to develop recommended procedures for Conservation Districts to discuss when developing policy for Conservation District if a Federal Shutdown should occur. A copy of this document available in this handbook. (See contents for page number)*

# NCDEA

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The National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA) suggests that the following items be considered when Conservation Districts develop policies for their local district in the case of a Federal Shutdown. We know all items listed may not be applicable to each district.

- ❖ **Will the District Office stay open during a Federal Shutdown? Yes (see below) No**  
(Decide if you need some policy or announcement that the district will be closed due to federal closure.

**If a District plans to continue working these items may need to be considered when making a policy for each individual District**

- ❖ **Location** that employees will be able to work
  - Home
  - Neighboring County
  - Local Courthouse
  - Stand-alone District office
  - Sister Agency Office in another building
  - If District pays rent in USDA co-located building, District will have authority to enter building to continue daily operations *only* if the District also pays utilities/phone for the rented area
  - Other
- ❖ **Materials** that employees will need to continue to do their job
  - **Finance**
    - Checkbooks
    - Deposit books
    - Financial Records
    - Safe Deposit Keys
    - Credit Cards
    - Active Cost Share Reports
    - Password Book is applicable
    - Materials for board meetings
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- **Office Supplies (Only Items that District has purchased )**
  - Copier paper
  - Pens
  - And supplies needs to complete job
- **Producers' folders** that are actively be worked on  
*(This does not include NRCS cost share programs)*
  - Cost Share folders
  - Grant Materials
- **Educational materials** for school projects
  - Charts
  - Materials to complete educational projects
    - School programs
    - Field days
    - Eco Meets
    - Farm Safety Days, etc.
- **District Equipment** that can be removed from office
  - Laptop
  - Portable Copiers
  - Portable Printers
  - Scanners
  - GPS
  - Level
  - Transit
  - Measuring Wheel
  - Survey Equipment
  - Districts will have to provide their own access to the internet during a federal closure
- **Vehicle**
  - Since NRCS vehicles will not be available, District should make policy concerning reimbursement of mileage if employee is required to use personal vehicle
  - May consider a set monthly rate for District employee reimbursement for use of personal vehicle
  - Districts may use or purchase their own vehicle for use for field work or district related work

❖ **Communication to keep Districts and District Staff informed of federal activity & decisions**

➤ **Agreement**

- A written agreement with USDA
  - Time of notification to District of date of shutdown
  - Time allowed to remove items from office
  - Partner agencies communicate with District of federal shutdown activity
  - NRCS Representative should be appointed to communicate to the District Board and Staff of shutdown progress

➤ **Email (*No Federal Government servers/equipment may be used during the shutdown*)**

- District create their own email address since all NRCS email will not be accessible
- District appoint someone to let employees know when they may enter federal building again by email or phone calls
- Keep District website updated to keep clients informed

➤ **Phone Calls**

- District set up their own phone number for customers to call
- Put contact information for the District on radio and in local paper

➤ **District Property**

- District staff should contact Chairman of District Board with details of location of financial records, files, etc.

❖ **Backups**

- District should do backups of all District materials before shutdown of office
- Keep backups in another location during shutdown
- District may need to consider purchasing an external hard drive to save district files

❖ **District Projects**

- How does District's plan to complete active projects in a timely manner
- If NRCS personnel are not available to sign off on project, will appropriate District staff have NRCS delegated job approval authority?