

CITY OF GULFPORT
FURLOUGH POLICY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is a “furlough?”

“Furlough” is the term being used to describe the recent mandate that City employees temporarily reduce their hours of work by 40 hours for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends September 30, 2011. All furloughs must be taken no later than September 18, 2011. These hours/days will be prorated for part-time employees, including employees in seasonal positions for purposes of this document, the term “furlough” refers to this temporary reduction of work hours or days.

Why are City employees being furloughed?

Furloughing city employees over the course of the next twelve months is one of the actions being implemented to assist in decreasing City expenditures in response to this unprecedented downturn in the national, state and local economies.

When will these furloughs be implemented and when will they end?

The furlough will be implemented beginning in October 1, 2010 and end September 30, 2011.

How many furlough hours will employees be required to take?

Employees will be required to reduce their hours of work by 40 hours by the remainder of this fiscal year, which ends September 30, 2011. For part-time employees they will be required to reduce their hours of work by 20 hours by the remainder of the fiscal year.

Is there a minimum number of hours that will be allowed to be taken at one time?

Exempt and non-exempt (hourly) employees will be allowed to take their furlough days in 4 hour increments during the specified furlough week.

Will Exempt employees be docked on a furlough scheduled week in the event that an exempt employee has a late arrival and/or leaves early for doctor appointments, etc?

Exempt employee will become non-exempt employees during furlough weeks and need to charge for partial absences. During the furlough week if an exempt employee, who is non-exempt during the furlough week, has a doctor’s appointment the employee must charge leave credits for the time away from work for the doctor’s appointment (if less than 32 hours worked during the furlough week).

Who will be responsible for scheduling of furlough days?

The responsibility for scheduling of furlough days will be determined by each individual Department based upon the department’s staffing needs.

Will employees have flexibility in determining furlough days?

Each Department will establish a plan, within the established guidelines, for scheduling furlough days and these plans *may* afford employees some flexibility in scheduling furlough days.

Will employees be able to offset their loss of pay due to furlough by working additional hours?

No. Making up furlough days does not achieve the cash savings expected through use of furloughs. It is possible that a department's operational needs will require some employees to work overtime, consistent with current City practices. However, overtime will not be permitted if it is for the sole purpose of making up for furlough hours.

May an employee volunteer to take additional furlough time or reduce her/his schedule to part-time in order to assume some or all of another employee's furlough time?

No.

Will requests for furlough days be subject to minimum staffing guidelines?

Furlough days will be scheduled in accordance with individual Department's furlough plans which will take departmental operational needs, including minimum staffing requirements, into consideration.

May employees take a furlough day on a legal holiday?

Yes.

May employees take a furlough day before or after a legal holiday?

Yes, employees may take a furlough day before or after a legal holiday.

Leave Questions

Will furloughs affect accrual of employees' leave benefits?

Accrual of vacation, sick leave, and personal and legal holidays will not be affected by furloughs for City employees.

May employees substitute paid leave during periods when furloughs are taken?

No, employees may not use vacation, sick leave, personal or legal holiday, or compensatory time or any other type of paid leave during furlough periods.

How do furloughs affect employees' already scheduled paid leave days?

Unless a designated furlough day falls within the scheduled leave period, furloughs will not necessarily affect already scheduled paid leave. Approval of employee leave and furlough requests will be subject to each department's operational needs.

May an employee use furlough time in conjunction with scheduled vacation?

Yes, an employee will be able to use furlough time in conjunction with scheduled vacation leave.

How will furloughs affect employees on Workers Compensation benefits?

Employees out on Workers Compensation are not subject to furloughs until they return to work. Employees will have their furlough days prorated for their remaining furlough obligation when they return to work in their City position

Will I be able to collect Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits in recognition of my furlough days?

No.

Payroll Questions

Will a special leave code be developed to track the reduced hours through payroll?

An accrual called "furlough" has been set up in Munis and in Kronos. Each employee has been granted 40 hours of "furlough" time. If you are using Kronos, you can request "furlough" time off using the time off request in the system just as you would request any other time off.

If you are using manual timesheets, just write in "furlough" and the payroll person in your department will enter the pay code for "furlough" which is 997.

Whose responsibility will it be to monitor employees' time to ensure the required furlough time is taken?

For departments on kronos, reports will be generated tracking furlough hours. Both you and your supervisor (or designee), will be responsible for making sure all hours are exhausted by the end of the pay period in fiscal year 2011, which is September 18, 2011.

How will furloughs affect child or spousal support payments, garnishments and/or tax? Levies being deducted from an employee's paycheck?

The process will not change with the implementation of furloughs. Orders for child/spousal support, garnishments, and tax levy deductions will continue to be enforced consistent with the directions from the Court or other authority issuing wage claim. Deduction amounts may be affected if the employee's disposable earnings as defined in the order are reduced and the deduction is calculated as a percentage of disposable earnings or is a fixed amount but limited to a specified percentage of disposable earnings.

What are the beginning and ending pay period dates associated with the beginning and ending of the furlough period and fiscal year?

Furlough may begin October 1, 2010. The ending pay period date for the furlough is **9/18/2011**.

How is overtime paid?

There should be no overtime pay. It is the intent of the City to avoid overtime during any furlough periods. Furlough days do not count as time worked for determining overtime in the workweek. In the event that any employee is authorized to work in excess of thirty two (32) hours during any furlough week, he/she shall be compensated at the employee's straight time rate up to forty (40) hours. All hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a work week shall be compensated at a rate of one and one-half times his/her hourly straight time rate.

How is an exempt status employee's schedule and pay handled?

Exempt employees lose their Fair Labor Standards Act exemption during the week they take a furlough day and are treated as hourly employees. Workloads need to be adjusted to reduce the need to work on furlough days. Exempt employees should not be required to work more than thirty-two (32) hours during a furlough week. Since exempt employees will be treated like non-exempt employees during a furlough week, all exempt employees will have to account for absences such as vacation and sick leave during those weeks, including partial day absences.