



Supreme Court of Illinois

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS COURTS

SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I.

Statement of Policy on Emergency Closings

This policy sets forth the Judicial Branch protocols regarding the management of emergency conditions that impact the safety and welfare of judicial branch officials, state-paid judicial branch employees, and the public. An emergency condition may require the closing of a court or state judicial branch office. A court or state judicial branch office may be declared closed if weather or other hazardous or emergency conditions or events are, or become such, that the safety and welfare of employees and citizens are threatened.

Prior to making such a decision, the judicial officer or administrative authority should be mindful that the courts labor under a heavy and public burden, and that closing a court or judicial branch office can be seriously disruptive to victims, litigants, witnesses, and others, particularly if a facility is closed prematurely or unnecessarily. Every effort should be made to continue the operations of a court or judicial office unless closing is absolutely necessary. In many circumstances, operations can be sustained via other methods, including limiting staffing to essential personnel or by continuing court operations virtually.

This policy outlines levels of authority and protocols to request an emergency closing during what would be normal business hours.

II.

Procedures

A. Authority and Notification Process

A decision to evacuate and/or close a court, the office of a clerk of court, a court-related entity, or other judicial office as a result of an emergency for reasons of severe weather or other conditions, shall be made as follows:



ISSUED

Supreme Court Offices: The Chief Justice (or, in the absence of the Chief Justice, the Administrative Director) has the authority to declare offices of the Supreme Court closed. A Supreme Court administrative authority (e.g., Clerk, Legal Research Director, Reporter of Decisions, etc.) may request an emergency closing of his or her office. Such a request must be approved by either the Chief Justice or the Administrative Director. A copy of the approved COURT FACILITY CLOSURE AND MODIFIED OPERATIONS FORM must be emailed to the Chief Justice, the Administrative Director, and the Supreme Court Communications Office.

Administrative Office: The Chief Justice and the Administrative Director have the authority to close the Administrative Office. The approved COURT FACILITY CLOSURE AND MODIFIED OPERATIONS FORM must be emailed to the Supreme Court Communications Office.

Appellate Districts: The Presiding Justice/Chair of the Executive Committee has the authority to approve closing an Appellate Court district. An appellate court administrative authority (e.g., Clerk of Appellate Court, Research Director) may request an emergency closing. The request must be approved by the Presiding Justice/Chair of the Executive Committee. A copy of the approved COURT FACILITY CLOSURE AND MODIFIED OPERATIONS FORM must be emailed to the Chief Justice, the Supreme Court Justice over the District, the Administrative Director, and the Supreme Court Communications Office.

Circuit Courts: The Chief Circuit Judge has the authority to close a Circuit Court. A circuit court administrative authority (e.g., Presiding Judge or Trial Court Administrator) may request an emergency closing. The request must be approved by the Chief Circuit Judge. A copy of the approved COURT FACILITY CLOSURE AND MODIFIED OPERATIONS FORM must be emailed to the Chief Justice, Supreme Court Justice over the District, the Administrative Director, and the Supreme Court Communications Office.

When requesting an emergency closing, the Court Facility Closure and Modified Operations Form (see attached) must be used. In extraordinary circumstances, oral requests may be made and approved. Such requests shall also address the evaluation criteria contained on the Court Facility Closure and Modified Operations Form. The completed Form must be submitted contemporaneously, absent extraordinary circumstances. In all cases the Supreme Court Communications Office shall be notified as soon as a decision is made to close to ensure proper communication via the Supreme Court's website and other mediums.

B. Coordination Among Courts/Offices

An administrative authority requesting to close a court or judicial office due to an emergency condition that may affect more than one court in that circuit or district should first communicate with each affected judicial authority within the respective circuit or district.

C. Public Service Announcements of Closures

Upon deciding to close a courthouse or judicial branch facility, the administrative authority, or his/her designee, should request that appropriate news media organizations make public service announcements of such closings and the canceling of court proceedings during such closure. Once notified of a closing, the Supreme Court Communications Office will work with JMIS to post the notice on the [Illinois Courts website](#) and the Supreme Court social media accounts.

D. Effect of County Government Closings

If a county has chosen to close county government buildings or offices, resulting in the unavailability of security personnel, the courthouse may, by necessity, also close. In such instances, a request to close does not need to be made. However, the administrative authority must follow the notification protocols of this policy.

E. Application of Policy

This policy and procedures set forth herein shall be applicable to all state-paid judicial branch officials and employees.

F. Review of Policy and Procedures

The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts is responsible for the oversight of this Emergency Closings Policy for the Judicial Branch.

NOTICE OF COURT FACILITY CLOSURE/MODIFIED OPERATIONS

Jurisdiction & Office: _____

Date(s)/Hours of /Closure/Modified Operations: _____

Action: Delayed Opening
Opening Time _____

Early Closing
Closing Time _____

Facility Closure
 Modified Operations: Essential Personnel Only
 Remote Operations

Describe the conditions on which the request is based:

- Severe Weather, please describe: _____
- Public Health, please describe: _____
- Facility-related, please describe: _____
- Other, please describe: _____

Please Identify Relevant Evaluation Criteria

Supreme Court Offices	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
Administrative Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
Appellate Court	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
Local Circuit Court(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
City Governments	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
Private Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
Major Highways	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed

Requested by:

_____ (Signature)
Judge or Other Administrative Authority

_____ (Title)

APPROVAL

Request Approved	_____	_____ Signature
Request Denied	_____	_____ Title (Chief
Request Modified	_____	Justice, Presiding Justice, Chief Judge, or AOIC
		Director)

Please forward a copy of this completed form, including required authorization, to the Administrative Director and the Supreme Court Office of Communications. Such action should be contemporaneous with closure or modification absent extraordinary circumstances.