FY2020 Staff Employee Furlough/Leave Mandate
Stephen F. Austin State University

Questions & Answers

1. What is a furlough?
   A furlough is normally a temporary leave of absence without pay or associated work duties for a designated period of time in order to meet an urgent or immediate budgetary need for cost reductions, or as part of a cost savings measure. SFA has decided to implement, for fiscal year 2020, a mandatory furlough but require staff to use accrued vacation and/or administrative leave or comp time as designated by the program guidelines. Staff without sufficient leave balances must take leave without pay for the mandatory days.

2. Who is required to participate in the furlough/leave mandate?
   All SFA leave-eligible employees as defined in SFASU policy 12.21 Vacation Leave.

3. Who is excluded from participation in the furlough/leave mandate?
   - Probationary Employees who have less than six months of state service (see question 11)
   - H1-B visa status staff employees
   - All staff whose assignments total less than 50% FTE
   - All student employees including:
     - Graduate assistants
     - Graduate Teaching assistants
     - Graduate Research assistants
     - Student workers, both work study and non-work study
   - Faculty with less than 12 month contract
   - SFA’s Charter School

4. How many days do I have to take off as furlough days?
   There are ten (10) days designated as mandatory furlough days in the current program. Those days are May 4th, May 8th, May 15th, May 22nd, June 12th, June 15th, July 3rd, July 6th, July 31st and August 3rd.

5. Can I use my comp time or unused administrative leave on the furlough days?
   If the vacation leave balance is exhausted, the employee may use previously awarded unused administrative leave, or previously earned comp time. Once all paid leave balances are exhausted, leave without pay (LWOP) must be taken.

6. Can I voluntarily choose leave without pay for the mandatory furlough days instead of turning in vacation time?
   No. State law requires that employees must use accrued leave before leave without pay (LWOP) is taken. Leave time must be taken in this order: vacation leave, administrative leave, and compensatory time.
7. Can I work extra hours in the pay period to make up for any unpaid furlough hours? No, there is no cost savings to the university if extra hours are worked. Overtime must be limited to extreme emergency situations, and must not be allowed to avoid the use of leave or LWOP. In cases where a non-exempt employee is required to work more than eight hours in a day, the supervisor should be consulted to allow for flexible use of the hours so the employee does not exceed 40 hours in a week. Exempt employees will not be allowed to accrue comp time through August 31, 2020.

8. May I use sick leave on a furlough day? If an employee is sick on a furlough day, they must provide documentation and have their department head fax or scan it to Human Resources to be allowed to use sick leave. Additionally, they will be required to use the equivalent number of hours of vacation, comp time (if applicable), or LWOP to make up the furlough day.

9. How will the furlough program affect benefits-eligible employees who work part-time? Furlough time will be prorated based upon FTE just as vacation time is prorated. For example, if an employee is 50% FTE, they earn 4 hours of vacation, and they would be required to use 4 hours of vacation for each mandatory day of furlough.

10. How will the furlough affect new employees who are in their initial probationary period with SFASU and are not yet allowed to use vacation? Employees in their initial SFASU probationary period are excluded from this furlough.

11. I am a probationary employee with less than six months’ service with SFASU and am exempt from the furlough. May I still report to work? No. Probationary employees who are excluded from furlough requirements must either telework or use a flexible schedule the week of the furlough day to secure 40 hours of work. If the probationary employee does not have internet access, or is unable to perform their job duties remotely, the supervisor will assign policy and/or procedural reviews, training materials, and/or other tasks. If guidance is needed in this regard, please contact the human resources department.

12. Can I choose to report to work or perform work on furlough time? No, furlough time is non-work time. Employees may not work on a furlough day. This includes checking and responding to email, whether on a computer or mobile device, returning phone calls, etc.

13. My department has a conflict with the scheduled furlough and must work on that day to meet a scheduled deadline or perform critical functions. Will I be required to make up the furlough day? Yes. The department head, with approval from the appropriate Vice President, will choose another day during the same month to make up the furlough day. However, please be aware that
temperature settings in the buildings will be adjusted on furlough days in order to maximize utility savings, and the buildings may therefore be uncomfortable to work in.

14. Who should I contact for leave balance information?
Contact payroll at payroll@sfasu.edu, or call extension 2451.

15. How will my benefits be affected?
- Furlough leave without pay will not affect your eligibility for state benefits such as health and dental insurance.
- Teachers Retirement System and Optional Retirement Plan contributions will not be reduced unless the leave is without pay.
- Unpaid furlough time will not impact the accumulation of paid annual leave, paid sick leave, or retirement service credits.

16. How should I submit my leave request for the furlough days?
Employees should submit their request for time off in the same manner that they currently use. If an employee is requesting leave without pay, the supervisor must complete the SFASU Leave Without Pay form and forward to the human resources department.

17. May I donate part of my leave or pay to support other employees in need?
No, each eligible employee will be required to take the time identified.

18. If an employee uses approved Family Medical Leave (FMLA) or Sick Leave Pool in FY2020, what is the impact on the employee’s required furlough?
Employees that have been or are currently on FMLA or sick leave pool are still subject to the university furlough days. Furlough days may be either incorporated into an employee’s leave or rescheduled to be taken before August 31, 2020. For further details, supervisors and employees will need to contact Human Resources to discuss the particular issues for each employee.

19. If I am on leave without pay, am I subject to the furlough?
Yes. If you are on LWOP during the scheduled furlough days, no additional action will need to be taken. When you return to work, you will be required to take the remaining scheduled furlough days, as well.

20. Am I eligible for unemployment during my days off?
No, SFA employees are not eligible for unemployment compensation during their days off.

21. How will the furlough affect garnishments being deducted from my paycheck?
It depends on the requirements of the garnishments.

22. How will the furlough affect child support payments taken from my paycheck?
The University forwards a set amount in accordance with court orders, so this dollar amount will not be reduced.
23. What will happen if I fail to take my required furlough days by the end of FY2020?
   All employees are required to take the mandatory furlough days on the days specified, unless an
   exception is granted. If an exception is granted, the substitute furlough day must take place in
   the same month. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.

24. How does furlough time affect overtime compensation?
   When a non-exempt employee physically works more than 40 hours in a work week, he or she is
   eligible for overtime compensation. Furlough time is not worked time. However, vacation leave
   taken on a furlough day counts towards total hours worked. Therefore, supervisors should allow
   employees to flex their time to avoid reporting over 40 hours in the week (including the leave
   taken for the furlough days).

25. What if an employee is required to report to work due to an emergency on his/her
    scheduled furlough day?
    If an employee, exempt or non-exempt is required to come to the office to work, an alternate
    furlough day will be scheduled by the supervisor.

26. If an employee will be in leave without pay status on any of the furlough days, will they
    still be paid for the holidays?
    Yes, they will still be paid for the holidays.

27. Some employees have been told through the employee discipline process that if they are
    in a leave with pay status again, they will be required to request a leave of absence from
    the President. Will that apply with the furloughs?
    No, the furloughs are a different type of leave and employees will not be required in these
    instances to request a leave of absence from the President.

28. Can faculty donate money or leave time to a staff employee who will be in a leave without
    pay status during the furlough?
    No, faculty cannot donate their leave time to a staff employee who will be in a leave without pay
    status during the furlough. If a faculty member would like to financially help a friend during this
    time, they may make an individual donation to the person outside of any university processes.

29. How will the furlough affect student workers?
    Student assistants and work-study students may be affected by the furlough in that the offices
    where they are employed will be closed and therefore the students will not be working. This will
    reduce the number of hours and therefore their pay for that period of pay.

30. What formula will be used in determining the earnings reduction amount for leave
    without pay during the furlough?
    An employee’s hourly rate of pay will be determined and their pay will be reduced by 8 hours for
    each day of the furlough where they must be in a without pay status.
31. As the person responsible for originating EPAF’s for our department, will I be responsible for completing an EPAF for every employee that will be in an unpaid status on the furlough days?
   No, we will not be using the EPAF process to record leave without pay. The department will be responsible for completing the SFASU Leave Without Pay form for each affected employee. This form must be forwarded to human resources for processing.

32. How will the furlough affect employees using Emergency FMLA (EFML)?
   These employees will be handled on a case-by-case basis. For further details, supervisors and employees will need to contact Human Resources to discuss their situation.

33. How will the furlough affect employees using Emergency Sick Leave (ESICK)?
   These employees will be handled on a case-by-case basis. For further details, supervisors and employees will need to contact Human Resources to discuss their situation.

**Please note that the university reserves the right to amend, add or delete any questions provided, as it relates to these frequently asked questions.**