
FPM On-Call Guideline

1. Guideline

Last Revised: May 5, 2026

2. Guideline purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a consistent, sustainable, and transparent strategy for after-hours support. These procedures ensure that students, faculty, and staff receive necessary assistance while balancing employee workload and personal time. This guideline document replaces all previous informal arrangements and applies to all staff assigned to on-call rotations.

3. Guideline Details

On-Call Nature: "Uncontrolled" Standby

On-call assignments are considered uncontrolled standby. While on-call:

- Employees are free to engage in preferred personal activities.
- Employees are not required to remain at home or at a fixed location, provided they remain within range of cellular/internet service and can meet response time requirements, as specified below.
- Employees must remain fit for duty (e.g., physically and mentally capable to perform the essential job functions) for the duration of the assignment. Please reference the university staff disciplinary policy detailing expectations related to behaviors and actions. <https://policy.usc.edu/staff-disciplinary-practices/>

Eligibility, Rotation and Scheduling

- **Eligibility:** Eligibility for on-call assignments is determined by each department based on role requirements and operational needs
- **Rotation:** Coverage is assigned on a rotational basis among eligible team members.
- **Duration:** Assignments typically run for one week (e.g., Thursday to Thursday or Monday to Monday), as defined by the department.
- **Supervisor Role:** The supervisor maintains the schedule and serves as the default secondary and escalation contact if the primary on-call staff is unavailable.
- **Trading Shifts:** Employees may swap shifts with advance supervisor approval.

Response Time Requirements

All federal, state laws and university policies supersede departmental guidelines and procedures.

Department guidelines and procedures are subject to change at any time and staff are responsible for familiarizing themselves with current guidelines.

Response expectations are determined by the department's Service Level Agreement (SLA). General guidelines include:

- **Initial Response:** On-call personnel must acknowledge the notification within 15 minutes (to be specified by the department).
- **Onsite Requirement (If Applicable):** Personnel must be onsite within two (2) hours of the initial notification.
- **Escalation:** If the on-call member is unable to respond or resolve the issue, they must follow the established departmental escalation path (e.g., notifying a Supervisor, Manager, or Director).

Compensation and Time Tracking

All compensation is administered in compliance with University Wage and Hour policies and applicable California/Federal law.

Non-Exempt Employees (Hourly)

- **Standby Time:** Time spent on uncontrolled standby (waiting for a call) is unpaid.
- **Alert Monitoring:** On-call personnel will not be compensated for simply viewing or acknowledging an alert unless further action is required.
- **Work Time:** Compensation begins the moment the employee initiates an action to respond to a ticket or alert(e.g., troubleshooting, coordinating with vendors).
- **Minimum Pay:** If an employee is required to perform work, they will be paid for the actual time worked or a departmental minimum (e.g., a Four-hour minimum for onsite reporting), whichever is greater.
- **Overtime:** Overtime will be paid in accordance with University policy and applicable law.

Exempt Employees (Salaried)

- On-call duties are considered part of the job responsibilities.
- Exempt employees are generally not eligible for additional compensation for on-call assignments, though workload should still be tracked for departmental workload analytics.

Employee Responsibilities

- **Availability:** Must be reachable via phone, text, or email during the on-call window. If an employee anticipates that they will be unavailable for any portion of their assigned on-call shift, they must notify their supervisor as soon as possible so that appropriate coverage arrangements can be made.
- **Equipment:** Must ensure they have access to a mobile device.

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- **Documentation:** All work performed must be documented in the relevant ticketing system
- **Time Reporting:** Non-exempt employees must accurately record start and end times for every on-call interaction in the official time-keeping system.

Excessive Workload Mitigation

If an abundance of alerts occurs such that a single employee cannot meet the demand, the employee should immediately escalate to their supervisor. The supervisor will then prioritize the workload or engage additional team members to ensure the operational needs of the department are met.

Non-Compliance

Participation in the on-call rotation is a requirement of employment. During scheduled on-call periods, employees are expected to remain reachable and able to respond within established timeframes, and to engage in proactive communication if circumstances arise that may affect their ability to respond. Failure to follow established on-call guidelines, particularly as part of a pattern of non-compliance, may be addressed through appropriate supervisory and disciplinary action, consistent with university policies, up to and including termination.

Review and Updates

These guidelines will be reviewed periodically by Department Leadership, Human Resources and University leadership to ensure continued compliance with legal requirements and operational needs.

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