

GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE

COVID19 PLANNING GUIDELINES

19 March 2020

Updated as of 13 April 2021

PURPOSE

These guidelines are expected to provide support to all government agencies to ensure business continuity ***before, during and after the pandemic***. They are meant to **support** key primary healthcare and pandemic management information highlighted in the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) National Preparedness and Response Plan, issued by the Ministry of Health, as well as the decisions of Cabinet and the Disaster Advisory Committee.

SCOPE

The Public Service Commission has developed these guidelines as per Section 10 of the State of Emergency Orders No. 34. These shall apply to all agencies listed below:

Public Administration Agencies
1. Accident Compensation Corporation
2. Agriculture and Fisheries
3. Attorney General
4. Audit Office
5. Central Bank of Samoa;
6. Commerce, Industry and Labour
7. Communications and Information Technology
8. Customs and Revenue
9. Development Bank of Samoa
10. Education, Sports and Culture
11. Electoral Commission
12. Electric Power Corporation
13. Finance
14. Foreign Affairs and Trade
15. Gambling Control Authority
16. Health
17. Justice and Courts Administration
18. Land Transport Authority
19. Legislative Assembly

20. Ministry of Police, Prisons and Corrections
21. National Kidney Foundation of Samoa
22. National University of Samoa
23. Natural Resources and Environment
24. Office of the Regulator
25. Ombudsman
26. Polynesian Limited/Samoa Airways
27. Prime Minister and Cabinet
28. Public Enterprises
29. Public Service Commission
30. Public Trust Office
31. Samoa Airport Authority
32. Samoa Bureau of Statistics
33. Samoa Fire and Emergencies Services Authority
34. Samoa Housing Corporation
35. Samoa International Finance Authority
36. Samoa Land Corporation
37. Samoa Law Reform Commission
38. Samoa Life Assurance Corporation
39. Samoa National Provident Fund
40. Samoa Ports Authority
41. Samoa Post Limited
42. Samoa Qualifications Authority
43. Samoa Shipping Corporation
44. Samoa Shipping Services
45. Samoa Sports & Facilities Authority
46. Samoa Tourism Authority
47. Samoa Trust Estates Corporation
48. Samoa Water Authority
49. Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa
50. Unit Trust of Samoa
51. Women, Community and Social Development
52. Works, Transport and Infrastructure

APPLICATION

While the PSC has intended for these guidelines to help all government agencies with their pandemic management and business continuity plans, all CEOs and Heads of agencies are encouraged to determine how it would be best applied in line with their internal processes and plans in place.

GUIDELINES

Overall principles

The overall goal should be to ensure the safety of, and care for, all employees during the pandemic. In addition, all government agencies must identify measures to ensure that the delivery of services is as much as possible not disrupted although reduction in fit/healthy staff may mean services would be delivered at reduced levels.

In particular, the following principles apply:

1. Delivery of services to the public must remain a priority during the pandemic, unless Cabinet has authorized otherwise.
2. This includes the efficient delivery of *essential services*.
3. All government agencies in the Sector must update or develop *Business Continuity Plans* (BCPs). This guideline provides basic instructions on how employees who are suspected to have contracted or transmitted the virus must be managed. However, the BCPs must clearly outline the agency's internal management process for all employees to follow (for example, employee contact tracing, quarantine and compulsory self-isolation).
4. All government employees are expected to continue to attend the workplace in line with their usual employment arrangements, except where alternatives are activated as part of a business continuity or workforce management plan (i.e., remote work² arrangements to ensure services are not disrupted).

High Risk Groups

5. Subject to guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, the High-Risk Groups may include the following:
 - o *Employees suspected or confirmed with the COVID19;*
 - o *All employees within the 60 years old and above age group;*
 - o *All employees with underlying medical conditions that may worsen with the transmission of the COVID19 (e.g., lung or heart disease, diabetes or conditions that affect their immune system).*

Leave Arrangements

6. If an employee becomes ill with, or is suspected to have contracted COVID-19, while in Levels 2 & 3, special leave with pay is applied.

Self-isolation

7. If an employee advises that they wish to self-isolate, (or care for a dependant who is required to self-isolate) they must not come into work and should work from home to the extent possible. These employees must provide periodic reports of their work completed from home to their immediate Supervisor. Employees must provide proof of contact from the Ministry of Health.

² Remote work is the practice of an employee working at their home, or in some other place that is not an organization's usual place of business

Alternative Work Arrangements

8. For employees that, due to the nature of their work, cannot work from home during Levels 2 & 3 CEOs may consider alternative work arrangements to cover work that is usually performed by other employees that is not within the scope of their role to maintain delivery of services. This may include temporarily changing work functions, location and/or hours of work. Where this is implemented, CEOs must inform the Commission.

Legal Obligation

9. Any government employee who deliberately provides false information or intentionally breaches any of the conditions set out in this Guideline and SOE Orders, will be subject to disciplinary action under Section 19: Code of Conduct, Public Service Act 2004 or any applicable laws.

Changing Levels

10. Subject to the advice of Cabinet and the Ministry of Health, the PSC will inform all agencies on when the workforce is expected to move from one Level to the next (either de-escalating or escalating, as per the 2019 Corona Virus National Preparedness and Response Plan).

All government agencies must:

11. Maintain all accurate records of employees. These must be kept as part of the Business Continuity Plan or internal Disaster Response management plans. Agencies may use the following basis to develop the Employee profile list:
 - o Name;
 - o Age;
 - o Mobile number;
 - o Dependents (60+ years & young children ages 0-4);
 - o Medical Conditions; and
 - o Place of Residence.
12. Circulate and update the contact/profile list of their employees to their Management.
13. Facilitate and coordinate the completion and submission of updates due to the relevant Sector Coordinator for submission of Situational Reports to NEOC.

All employees are responsible for:

14. Informing your Corporate Services Division as soon as possible via mobile or other means *if you begin to experience or show any of the symptoms related to COVID19, as advised by MOH*. You are encouraged to *self-isolate* at this point.
15. Submitting a medical clearance report to your Corporate Services Division at least three (3) days prior to resuming work, if *suspected* with the COVID19 (refer to MOH guidelines).
16. Submitting a medical clearance to your Corporate Services Division, showing that you are physically fit to resume work, at least five (5) days prior, once you have *recovered from the COVID19* (refer to MOH guidelines).
17. Submitting a medical clearance report to your Corporate Services Division at least three (3) days prior to resuming work following mandatory quarantine.

Support for NEOC Operations:

18. All CEOs, DCEOs, ACEOs, and Principal Officers must be on standby to provide on call assistance at the hospital, borders, etc as and when required by NEOC;
19. All other employees not mentioned above are to be guided by further instruction through their CEO.

For more information:

20. Your first point of contact for queries relating to employment conditions and other related matters (e.g., leave, working from home), should be your ***Corporate Services Division***;
21. Should you need further information or clarification in relation to this Guideline, contact the following:
 - a. *Public Administration Sector Coordination Division* – pasc@psc.gov.ws or 22123
 - b. *Public Service Performance and Policy Division* – psp@psc.gov.ws or 22123
 - c. *Ministry for Public Enterprises*

PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE & RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE

Level 1

Workplaces remain open

KEY MESSAGES:

- Come to work
- Maintain physical/social distancing
- Practice proper hygiene etiquette
- Be vigilant at all times
- Be prepared for the unexpected

IN EFFECT	ACTION PLAN	COLOR CODE
<i>Effective immediately</i>	All Government Agencies to immediately enforce the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop or update Business Continuity Plans (<i>refer to Guiding Principle 3</i>); b. Encourage proper hygiene practices, respiratory etiquettes and social distancing in work places; c. Encourage wearing facial masks; d. Avoid large gatherings/crowds, shaking hands, and other social contacts; e. Develop a strategy to manage 'remote work' away from offices to be in effect when in Levels 2 & 3; f. All government agencies to encourage the elevated use of electronic means or social media for communication purposes; g. Promote use of video conferencing for all meetings and training; h. CEOs should make determinations under their special powers to suspend or defer government programs that bring together more than 5 people in one place; i. Cancel all international/regional meetings that Samoa had planned to host or participate in; 	Code Yellow

j. Contact information with details of Top tier Management to be collated for future referral to NEOC to assist in communication

2. All agencies are encouraged to conduct risk assessments for their staff, using the template attached as *Annex 3*.

Level 2

Workplaces remain open

KEY MESSAGES:

- Come to work, except employees classified as High Risk
- Maintain physical/social distancing
- Practice proper hygiene etiquette
- Be vigilant at all times
- Be prepared for the unexpected
- Activate Business Continuity Plans and remote work arrangements (i.e., roster)

IN EFFECT	ACTION PLAN	COLOR CODE
<p>Effective in the event there is a suspected case in the community, and 7-9 confirmed cases in managed isolation</p> <p><i>(Relies on PSC advice and confirmation based on the advice of Cabinet)</i></p>	<p>All government agencies (except essential services) must observe the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Open from Monday to Friday; b) Working hours will be from 9am – 3pm; c) Continue to observe and practice proper hygiene practices, respiratory etiquettes and social distancing in work places and when responding to customer enquiries in accordance with current MOH guidelines; d) Those classified as High Risk, should work from home. <i>Refer to Annex 5 for reporting template.</i> e) Subject to the decision of Cabinet, no adjustments should be made to an employees’ salary and entitlements (e.g., leave) as a result of the above changes; f) All first tier (CEOs, DCEOs) and second tier (ACEOs, Principal Officers) employees may be asked to be on standby in the case of providing support and assistance to NEOC; and g) Any additional conditions or instructions will be confirmed through a PSC Circular Memorandum. 	<p>Code Orange</p>

Level 3

Complete Shutdown for non-essential work

Key Message:

- Work from home (except for essential workers)

IN EFFECT	ACTION PLAN	COLOR CODE
<p>Effective in the event there are more than 10 cases in managed isolation and/or confirmed community transmission</p> <p><i>(Relies on PSC advice and confirmation based on the advice of Cabinet)</i></p>	<p>In the event a COVID19 community case is CONFIRMED, the following will come into effect:</p> <p>Aside from essential services, all other employees must remain at, and, work from home unless advised otherwise, or until Cabinet issues an official directive declaring that it is safe to resume work. <i>Services classified as essential are listed in Annex 6.</i></p> <p>In line with the Guiding Principles listed on Page 3, all CEOs must consider flexibility in employment arrangements for non-essential employees. All workers should work from home if possible. Managers must ensure they have a plan to maintain communication and connection with their divisional staff, to ensure business and service delivery continuity. Reporting template for employees working from home is attached as Annex 5.</p> <p><i>Non-essential employees are NOT required to come to work but the first tier (CEOs, DCEOs) and second tier (ACEOs, Principal Officers) may be asked to be on standby in the case of providing support and assistance to essential services Emergency Teams.</i></p>	<p>Code Red</p>

Recovery

IN EFFECT	ACTION PLAN	COLOR CODE
<p><i>(Relies on PSC Advice and confirmation based on the advice of Cabinet)</i></p>	<p>Upon receipt of official Cabinet advice to resume work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All employees must return to work on the specified date as per the Cabinet directive; • All employers must ensure that ALL employees (whether or not they were ill with COVID-19) are fit to return to the workplace before resumption of work; • All employees must continue to observe proper hygiene practices as per MOH advice in Level 1; and • All Corporate Divisions and responsible officers must clarify or settle any issues in relation to leave entitlements and other work arrangements made before and during the pandemic response. 	<p>Code White</p>

All employers must consider the following in their Business Continuity Plans:

Official Communication

The most updated and official information in relation to the COVID-19 and the government’s response planning procedures can be found on the Samoa Ministry of Health website and official Facebook page.

Ministry of Health Website: www.health.gov.ws

Government of Samoa Website www.samoagovt.ws

Facebook: @samoagovt @publichealthsamoa

Annex 1: NATIONAL COVID 19 ALERT LEVELS

LEVELS	LEVEL 0 – NORMAL/ NO CASE	LEVEL 1 – PROCEED CAREFULLY	LEVEL 2 – EXTREME CAUTION	LEVEL 3 – STAY HOME, STAY SAFE
STATUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No case ➤ Country wide preparedness and readiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1-6 confirmed cases in managed isolation ➤ Low risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 7-9 confirmed cases in managed isolation and suspected community transmission ➤ Moderate risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More than 10 cases in managed isolation and/or confirmed community transmission. ➤ High Risk.
COLOUR CODE				
ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Travel Advisories activated. ➤ Public awareness campaigns through sector wide coordination (led by the Ministry of Health and NEOC) ➤ Community engagements on public health. ➤ Review of existing national preparedness and response laws, policies and plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State of Emergency restrictions ➤ Encourage social and physical distancing. ➤ Encourage basic hygiene e.g: hand sanitizing. ➤ Encourage wearing facial masks in public places. ➤ Periodic testing of frontline staff. ➤ Enforce home isolation after discharge from quarantine for additional 7 days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State of Emergency restrictions ➤ Border closure with the exception of Cabinet authorised entries (aircrafts and vessels) ➤ Restart quarantine period in all managed isolation facilities. ➤ Mandated quarantine of front line and supportive staff ➤ Mandated wearing of facial masks nationally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State of Emergency restrictions. ➤ Everyone stays home ➤ Complete border closure. ➤ Activation of COVID 19 Zoning depending on location of community case identified. ➤ Complete lockdown of zone areas. ➤ Ban all mass gatherings. ➤ School closure. ➤ Closure of all services (public and private) except

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enforce border control measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enforce social and physical distancing in public gatherings. ➤ Enforce basic hygiene eg: hand sanitizing ➤ Enforce home isolation after discharge from quarantine for additional 7 days. ➤ Restrict inter island travels. 	<p>for essential and emergency services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quarantine of front line and support staff. ➤ No inter island travels
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Ombudsman	Luamanuvao Katalina Sapolu	katalina.sapolu@ombudsman.gov.ws
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Samoa Tourism Authority	Faamatuainu Suifua Faamatuainu	faamatuainu@samoa.travel
Samoa Trust Estates Corporation	Patea Loli Malo Setefano	patea@stec.ws
Samoa Water Authority	Seugamaalii Jamie Saena	Jammie.Saena@swa.gov.ws
Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa	Seuseu Dr. Joseph Tauati	seuseu@srosmanagement.org.ws
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Works, Transport and Infrastructure	Magele Hoe Viali	hoe.viali@mwti.gov.ws
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ANNEX 3:

COVID-19 HIGH RISK SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This medical questionnaire² will help you identify if you are at greater health risk if you become infected with COVID-19. This is subject to clinically proven tests and official guidelines issued by the Samoa Ministry of Health. The questionnaire shares with you the COVID-19 high-risk groups so that you can self-identify whether these may apply to you or your family members. The high-risk groups have been identified based on the information released by The Chinese Centre for Disease Control (CCDC).³

Process

1. Please read through the questionnaire in Table 1 carefully. Tick yes or no.
2. Complete Table 2 and select the box that is most applicable to you.
3. The survey classifies individuals into **three risk categories** – *low, medium and high*.
 - a. Staff self-assessed as high risk would have answered ‘yes’ to three or more of the 11 questions posed.
 - b. For the medium risk category, staff would have answered Yes to 1-2 questions.
 - c. Low risk staff would have answered no to all questions.
4. Consider sharing this with the Head of your agency.

Table 1:

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Are you aged over 60?		
Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for any cardiovascular disease? <i>i.e., coronary heart disease, heart failure, arrhythmia, peripheral artery disease, congenital heart disease</i>		
Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for diabetes mellitus? <i>i.e., type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, prediabetes</i>		
Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for any respiratory disease / lung disorder / pulmonary disease? <i>i.e., asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pulmonary fibrosis, pneumonia</i>		
Have you ever been diagnosed with hypertension? <i>i.e., high blood pressure</i>		
Have you ever been diagnosed with any type of cancer?		

² This medical questionnaire was shared by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It has been contextualized to suit Samoa’s situation.

³ This information consisted of medical data collated from the first 72,314 cases of COVID-19 found in the first 40 days of the outbreak (until 11 February) in China. The information released by the CCDC highlights that certain groups of patients are at greater risk of developing severe disease if they become infected with COVID-19.

Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for any cerebrovascular disease? <i>i.e., any types of stroke (silent, minor), mini stroke, transient ischaemic attack</i>		
Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for a condition that affects your immunity?		
Have you ever been told by a medical professional that you have reduced function of the spleen?		
Are you currently pregnant?		
Is your body mass index greater than or equal to 40? <u>Web Link to CDC Adult BMI Calculator</u> <u>Web Link to CDC BMI Percentile Calculator for Child and Teen</u>		

Table 2:

Full Name:		Position:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please select this box if you answered NO to all the questions above			
<input type="checkbox"/> Please select this box if you answered YES to <u>one or two questions</u> above			
<input type="checkbox"/> Please select this box if you answered YES to <u>three or more questions</u> above			

Annex 4:
NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATION CENTRE
SECTOR SITUATION REPORT

NAME OF EVENT:		SITREP #:
DATE/TIME:	From:	To:
SECTOR RESPONSE OVERVIEW:		
RESPONSE ACTIONS TO DATE:		
RESPONSE ACTIONS TO BE COMPLETED:		
MEMBER AGENCIES/STAFF INVOLVED:		
RESPONSE GAPS:		
ANY OTHER MATTER:		

Annex 5:

REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR STAFF WORKING FROM HOME



Government of Samoa

MINISTRY OF _____

<i>Start Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>
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The following are key performance targets for _____(Name)_____, _____(Position)_____ while working remotely / away from Office during the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Key Performance Targets (as per Performance Plan)		%
❖		
Activities		%
		%
		%
		%
		%
Other Activities		%
ACEO Comments <i>(for Officers below Senior Executive Level – i.e., Principal/Senior/Officer Level)</i>		

CEO Comments <i>((for ACEO Level))</i>		
HRC COMMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)		
 ACEO/CEO Approval	 Officer Approval (if applicable)	 PSC Chairman Endorsement (if applicable)
Date:	Date:	Date:

Note: *In terms of approval and/or endorsement of reports, SOEs and other government agencies outside of PSC jurisdiction do not need PSC Chairman’s endorsement. This is only an example and agencies are encouraged to contextualize to suit the nature of your work.*

Annex 6:

GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SECTOR EMPLOYERS DURING COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS MARCH 2020

1. Which services are classified as essential services?

For the purpose of this Guideline, and, consistent with 'exempted services' under the Public Holidays Act 2008, the following services are classified as essential services:

- MAF – Quarantine, Fisheries & Regulatory Division
- MCIT – Broadcasting Services (Radio 2AP)
- MPMC – Immigration Services
- MOF – Payroll & Budget
- MNRE – Meteorology, Waste Management & Disaster Management Division
- MOH – Public Health & Hospital Services
- MCR – Customs & Border Management Division
- MWTI – Maritime Division, Civil Aviation Division and Land Transport Division
- Office of the Regulator – Spectrum Management and Technical Division
- Electric Power Corporation
- Samoa Water Authority
- Samoa Fire Services Authority
- Ministry of Police, Prisons and Corrections
- Samoa Shipping Corporation
- Samoa Airport Authority
- Samoa Ports Authority
- Land Transport Authority
- The Electoral Commissioner, his or her staff and such assistants working under his or her direction during elections

2. With the COVID-19 High-Risk Self-assessment questionnaire, how would you determine if an employee is considered a high risk?

The survey classifies individuals into three risk categories – low, medium and high. Staff self-assessed as high risk would have answered 'yes' to three or more of the 11 questions posed. For the medium risk category, staff would have answered Yes to 1-2 questions. Low risk staff would have answered no to all questions.

3. Why are pregnant employees and employees with children between the age of 0 - 4 not classified as High Risk?

Similarly, to the conditions that were set out for the measles that affected Samoa last year. The Public Service Commission (PSC) depends heavily on the medical advice from MOH as well as Cabinet specifically the Cabinet Directives (FK) and State of Emergency Order(s).

The current statistics obtained from the World Health Organization only emphasizes *people aged 60 years + and people with underlying health conditions as those with the highest risk if affected by the COVID19*. Although Pregnant women and employees with children between the ages of 0-4 are still considered vulnerable they are currently not included in the high-risk groups mentioned unless they have underlying health conditions. However, the Public Administration Sector COVID19 Planning Guidelines provided indicates that in the event of a *confirmed case*, a complete shutdown will follow for non-essential services. CEO discretion is also advised, for pregnant employees in essential services.

4. Our CEO has asked all our employees to continue working from 9am – 5pm. Which legal authority prevails the Commission or the CEOs powers as specified in the Orders?

A misinterpretation of the orders has resulted in employees being asked to work beyond the hours set by the Commission. While the Special powers of Government CEOs are empowered; they are specifically empowered for two reasons only and that is the *implementation of the Sector Preparedness and Response Matrix Consolidated for Corona Virus Pandemic*. No specific mention is made for working conditions which is the current and existing mandate of the Commission.

Therefore, all working conditions as per the following conditions are to be adhered by all Ministries and Public Bodies as signed by *The Head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, in consultation with Cabinet under FK (20) Faapitoa 39, and pursuant to Article 105 of the Constitution, make the following ORDERS:*

SOE Orders. Restriction for Government Services (Aiaiga mo Galuega a le Malo):

(1) The Public Service Commission (“Commission”) is to determine conditions in which employees are to continue working under, with the objective of ensuring minimal spread of infection.

(2) The Commission’s conditions shall apply to all Government Ministries and Public Bodies.

(3) All Government trips overseas are hereby suspended until further notice.

This means that the authority alone remains with the Commission for determining working hours and working conditions for all Government services.

5. Where can I find the COVID-19 High Risk Self-Assessment Questionnaire?

Please refer to page 14 of the Public Administration Sector COVID-19 Planning Guidelines.

6. How is overtime calculated for staff who continue working after 3pm especially for agencies who are still working from 9am to 5pm, with overtime to start after 5pm as per normal conditions?

The change in hours are only for non-essential service while essential services are to remain open.

PSC retains its position that overtime should still commence from 5pm. Our conditions specify that essential services remain open, which means they continue work hours as usual. However, the CEO may include flexible working hour arrangements so that not more than 5 people are working within a shift or rostered schedule.

However, similar to how our operations are being conducted as of now, our concern is that allowing the overtime to commence from 3pm would defeat the whole purpose of the hours being put in place specifically for non-essential services.

If we consider overtime for non-essential employees, this also means we have to include strict conditions to ensure that the usual office work that can be conducted had the normal operating hours still remained is not considered as overtime.

7. For staff who no longer have access to public transport, will they be entitled to an allowance or overtime if they stay on site 24/7? For example, a night-watchman who lives out of town and works 5pm – 9am from Monday – Thursday and then Friday 5pm – Monday 9am.

If transportation is an issue for the employee, CEOs may make appropriate transportation arrangements using government vehicles to transport employees if necessary, to meet the needs of the service.