

Under the new stimulus bill called the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) there was new leave for federal employees added called Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). Postal employees qualify for this leave.

This evening, USPS management shared information with me that they provided to their USPS leadership. The content of this email is as follows:

Good Afternoon

Effective March 12, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (Act) provides employees with up to 600 hours of paid Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). This leave is available to employees beginning on March 12, 2021, and continuing through September 30, 2021—or until the funding established in the Emergency Federal Employee Leave Fund (Fund) for reimbursement is exhausted. The leave is available to eligible employees who are unable to work due to one of eight qualifying reasons as summarized in the chart below:

Emergency Federal Employee Leave	
Qualifying Reasons	Leave Eligibility
<p>An employee is entitled to take EFEL related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work because the employee:</p> <p>is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.</p> <p>has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All career and non-career employees, regardless of tenure, are immediately eligible for EFEL. Full-time Employees can receive up to 600 hours of paid EFEL, capped at \$2,800 per pay period. Part-time Employees can receive up to the proportional equivalent of 600 hours, capped at a proportional equivalent of \$2,800 per pay period.
	Other Considerations
<p>is caring for an individual who is subject to such an order as in (1) or has been so advised as in (2).</p> <p>is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis.</p> <p>is caring for the employee's son or daughter if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, requires or makes optional a virtual learning instruction model, requires or makes optional a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning instruction models, or if the child care provider of the son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions.</p> <p>is experiencing any other substantially similar condition.</p> <p>is caring for a family member with a mental or physical disability or who is 55 years of age or older and incapable of self-care, without regard to whether another individual other than the employee is available to care for such family member, if the place of care for such family member is closed or the direct care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19.</p> <p>is obtaining immunization (vaccination) related to COVID-19 or is recovering from any injury, disability, illness, or condition related to such immunization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EFEL does not count as creditable service toward an employee's retirement benefits. Employees cannot contribute to Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) while on EFEL.

As a reminder, the Postal Service provides an essential federal government service as part of the nation's critical infrastructure. Therefore, postal employees are generally not subject to Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation orders related to COVID-19, so employees will generally not be eligible to use EFEL for qualifying reason (1) above. Additionally, no substantially similar condition has been identified that would qualify an employee to use leave for qualifying reason (6) above.

We are continuing to work the issues associated with implementation of these new leave requirements, and we anticipate receiving additional guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), which will administer the Fund, in the coming weeks. In the interim, employees seeking to use EFEL should submit a PS Form 3971 indicating for which of the eight qualifying reasons they must take leave, and employees must affirmatively state that they are unable to work because of the qualifying reason.

For now, this leave should be managed and tracked within the Enterprise Resource Management System (eRMS). Timekeepers will be instructed to enter the interim hours code 086-21 in eRMS for all employees, and then verify the Administrative Leave is entered in the appropriate timekeeping system using either hours code 086-21 for City or DACA Code O for Rurals. For immediate reference, attached is the timekeeping quick reference table.

We will update you with additional instructions and guidance as our processes for managing this new leave are developed and implemented. We ask that you share this information with your teams as soon as possible, given that this leave will become available on March 12.

Thank you for your support as we continue to prioritize the safety and well-being of our employees during this challenging time.