



Public Works On-Call Policy Template

A complete on-call policy for public works: rotation, response times, pay, call-back, equipment, fatigue, and documentation.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Use this template to put water breaks, sewer backups, and ice storms on a written system — who is on call, what they're paid, how fast they respond, and how fatigue and records are managed.

WHEN TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- When on-call rotation currently lives in the supervisor's head
- When call-back pay differs by who answers the phone
- Before storm season tests the informal system
- When crews complain the same people always get called
- When FLSA questions about on-call time have no written answer

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT HELPS PREVENT

- FLSA claims over unpaid on-call and call-back time
- Response failures at 2 a.m. because 'someone' was on call
- Rotation resentment that drives CDL holders to the private sector
- Fatigued operators running heavy equipment after all-night calls
- Overtime disputes with no records behind either side

Faulkner HR Solutions focuses on the system behind the people problem. This tool is designed to help employers slow down the decision, identify the risk, and create proof before the issue becomes a claim, complaint, turnover event, or credibility problem.

BEFORE YOU START: READINESS CHECKLIST

Gather the following before working through this document. Incomplete inputs are one of the most common reasons employer decisions fail under later scrutiny.

Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Employee name and role	
☐	Date of incident, request, or separation	
☐	Supervisor involved	



Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Policy or handbook section that applies	
☐	Prior documentation on file	
☐	Pay records, if applicable	
☐	Relevant emails, texts, notes, or complaints	
☐	Decision-maker name	
☐	Deadline, if applicable	



ON-CALL POLICY TEMPLATE

Adapt each section, strike what doesn't apply, and adopt formally. Bracketed choices are decision points for your operation.

Section 1 — Eligibility and Assignment

On-call duty applies to [list positions: water/wastewater operators, street crew, utility technicians]. Employees must hold required licenses/certifications for the systems they cover, maintain reliable transportation and phone contact, and reside or station within a response-feasible distance of [X minutes] to designated facilities. New employees enter rotation after [90 days / completion of training checklist].

Section 2 — Rotation

On-call rotates [weekly] among qualified staff, published [quarterly] in advance by the [Director]. Swaps are permitted with supervisor approval, recorded on the schedule, and transfer full responsibility. No employee may hold consecutive rotations except during declared emergencies or documented staffing shortages. Holiday rotations are equalized across the year.

Section 3 — Response Standards

Standard	Requirement (edit)
Phone acknowledgment	Within [15] minutes of dispatch/callout
On-site response	Within [45-60] minutes for emergencies
Fitness to respond	No alcohol/impairing substances while on call; report inability immediately
Escalation	If unreachable in [15] min, dispatch calls [backup, then supervisor]

Section 4 — Compensation (verify against FLSA and your pay plan)

Element	Provision (edit)
On-call stipend	[\$X per day / \$X per week] for carrying the duty phone (restricted-freedom analysis documented)
Call-back pay	Minimum [2] hours at applicable rate per call-back; actual hours if longer
Multiple calls	Calls within the same [2-hour] window treated as one call-back; new window = new minimum
Remote resolution	Phone-only fixes paid at actual time in [15-min] increments, minimum [30 min]
Hours counting	All response time counts toward overtime; travel from home per policy [and FLSA]

**Section 5 — Equipment and Vehicles**

Adopted	Provision	Notes
☐	Duty phone/radio issued and answered while on call	
☐	Take-home vehicle rules: response use only [personal-use tax treatment addressed]	
☐	Required tools/PPE stocked before rotation starts	
☐	Vehicle/equipment condition reported at rotation handoff	

Section 6 — Safety and Fatigue

Adopted	Provision	Notes
☐	Rest standard: employees working [X] night hours are released from next-day duty until [X hours] rest, at supervisor direction	
☐	No solo confined-space, trench, or high-risk work on emergency calls — second responder required	
☐	After-action fatigue check before operating heavy equipment	
☐	Supervisor may order stand-down; service pressure never overrides safety	

Section 7 — Documentation

Record	Captured by / where	Retention
Callout log: time called, acknowledged, on-site, cleared		
Work performed and materials used		
Time entries matching the callout log		
Swaps and schedule changes		

Adoption

Role	Name / signature	Date
Director		
City manager / administrator		
Effective date recorded by		



STOP AND REVIEW BEFORE ACTING

If any statement below is true, pause. Get the decision reviewed by HR, counsel, or Faulkner HR Solutions before you act.

- ☐ On-call restrictions are so tight the 'stipend' time may be compensable hours (FLSA restricted-freedom analysis needed).
- ☐ Call-back minimums are being paid differently across departments.
- ☐ An operator ran a backhoe on two hours of sleep last storm.
- ☐ The rotation exists nowhere in writing.
- ☐ Response times are promised to council that staffing cannot deliver.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Before this file is closed, the employer should be able to answer every question below and point to where the proof lives.

Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What happened?	
When did it happen?	
Who observed or reported it?	
What policy, standard, deadline, or expectation applies?	
What decision was made?	
Who had authority to make the decision?	
What alternatives were considered?	
What risk was reviewed?	
What follow-up is required?	
Where is the proof stored?	

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Confusing 'on call' with 'waiting to be engaged' — heavily restricted on-call time can be compensable in full.
2. Paying call-backs from arrival instead of per the written minimum rules.
3. Letting the same two employees carry every holiday.
4. Skipping the fatigue provisions until an accident writes them for you.
5. Promising 30-minute response with a rotation that lives 45 minutes out.
6. Keeping no callout log, then losing every pay dispute by default.



WHAT TO DO NEXT

Fill the bracketed decisions with your numbers, run the compensation section past FLSA review, adopt formally, and publish the first quarter's rotation. Audit callout logs against payroll after the first storm — that's where the system proves itself or doesn't.

Before you terminate, deduct, discipline, classify, or respond, get the decision reviewed.

Call 210.446.8730 or email thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info.



Public-sector HR decisions have to survive more than internal disagreement. They have to survive records requests, council questions, budget scrutiny, and public trust.

Need help applying this to a real workplace decision?

Faulkner HR Solutions helps Texas employers, nonprofits, municipalities, and growing businesses fix the people systems behind recurring workplace problems.

If this document raised a risk flag, do not guess your way through the next step.

Call: 210.446.8730

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Website: faulknerhrsolutions.info

DISCLAIMER

This resource is provided for general employer education and planning purposes. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship. Employment laws, agency guidance, and local requirements may change. Employers should review the facts of each situation before acting and consult appropriate HR or legal counsel when needed.