# Downtime Policy

To use this template, simply replace the text in dark grey with information customized to your organization. When complete, delete all introductory or example text and convert all remaining text to black prior to distribution.

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| **Policy Owner** | Name the person/group responsible for this policy’s management. |
| **Policy Approver(s)** | Name the person/group responsible for implementation approval of this policy. |
| **Related Policies** | Name other related enterprise policies both within or external to this manual. |
| **Related Procedures** | Name other related enterprise procedures both within or external to this manual. |
| **Storage Location** | Describe physical or digital location of copies of this policy. |
| **Effective Date** | List the date that this policy went into effect. |
| **Next Review Date** | List the date that this policy must undergo review and update. |

# Purpose

Describe the factors or circumstances that mandate the existence of the policy. Also state the policy’s basic objectives and what the policy is meant to achieve.

[Company Name] is committed to ensuring reliable information technology services. In order to meet this objective, [Company Name] systems may need to be taken offline to maintain or improve system performance, safeguard data, or to respond to emergency situations.

# Scope

Define to whom and to what systems this policy applies. List the employees required to comply, or simply indicate “all” if all must comply. Also indicate any exclusions or exceptions, i.e. those people, elements, or situations that are not covered by this policy or where special consideration may be made.

The downtime policy applies to any employee who handles information systems within [Company Name]. The goal of this policy is to explain those circumstances during which downtime may occur, anticipated durations of downtime events, and procedures for notifying affected users.

# Definitions

Define any key terms, acronyms, or concepts that will be used in the policy. A standard glossary approach is sufficient.

# Governing Laws & Regulations

If applicable, list any laws or regulations that govern the policy or with which the policy must comply. Confirm with the legal department that the list is full and accurate. If there are no pertinent governing laws or regulations, delete this section.

# Policy Statements

Describe the rules that comprise the policy. This typically takes the form of a series of short prescriptive and proscriptive statements. Sub-dividing this section into sub-sections may be required depending on the length or complexity of the policy.

## Planned Downtime

From time to time, it will be necessary to make systems unavailable for the purpose of performing upgrades, maintenance, or housekeeping tasks. The goal of these tasks is to ensure maximum system performance and prevent future system failures. The following activities fall within the definition of Planned Downtime:

* Application of patches to operating systems and other applications in order to fix vulnerabilities and bugs, add functionality, or improve performance.
* Monitoring and checking of system logs.
* Security monitoring and auditing.
* Disk defragmentation, disk cleanup, and other general disk maintenance operations.
* Required upgrades to system physical memory or storage capacity.
* Installation or upgrade of applications or services.
* System performance tuning.
* Regular backup of system data for the purpose of disaster recovery.

In the event that any of these activities will require downtime to perform, every effort will be made to perform the procedure during off-hours in order to minimize the impact on those who use the affected systems or services. The following time periods will be used to carry out Planned Downtime activities:

* [List day and hours]
* [List day and hours]
* [List day and hours]

On occasion, it may be necessary to have Planned Downtime during regular business hours, namely if outside personnel are required to perform more elaborate procedures.

If this is the case, then this Planned Downtime will be communicated to identify users of affected resources using the Notification of Downtime mechanism described below.

## Emergency Downtime

Unexpected circumstances may arise where systems or services will be interrupted without prior notice. Every effort will be made to avoid such circumstances. However, incidences may arise involving a compromise of system security, the potential for damage to equipment or data, or emergency repairs. If the affected system(s) cannot be brought back online within [insert time duration], affected users will be contacted via the Notification of Downtime mechanism described below.

## Notification of Downtime

Users will be notified of downtime according to the following procedure:

* The system administrator for the system in question is responsible for notifying all identified users of Planned Downtime, as well as any unplanned interruptions to system availability as they occur.
* The system administrator will first notify all affected users via [name primary notification method, such as email]. [Describe any other standard notification methods, such as an intranet bulletin board.] All users are responsible for checking [name primary notification method] for downtime and system status notifications. In the event that the [name primary notification system] is unavailable due to Emergency Downtime, the system administrator will contact department heads by [describe alternate notification method, such as telephone] to inform them of the situation.
* If general maintenance procedures will cause Planned Downtime during regular business hours, and the procedure will last less than [insert time duration], then the system administrator must notify system users [insert time duration] prior to the Planned Downtime.
* If Planned Downtime beyond general maintenance is scheduled that will last longer than [insert time duration], then the system administrator must give [insert number] business days’ notice for every day of anticipated system unavailability. This step must be taken regardless of whether the downtime is scheduled to take place during off hours or regular business hours.
* In the event of Emergency Downtime, the system administrator will use his/her discretion in notifying end users of the situation. In emergency circumstances where time is of the essence, it may not be possible for the system administrator to engage in normal downtime notification activities. When emergency measures are completed, or if [insert time duration] has elapsed with no resolution, then the system administrator will contact all users with information on system status and/or information on additional expected downtime.

All downtime announcements will provide the following information:

* Systems and services that are affected, as well as suggested alternatives to them (if any).
* Start and end times of the Planned Downtime period, or estimated time to recovery in the event of Emergency Downtime.
* The reasons why the downtime is taking place.

Any ongoing problems that are anticipated as a result of the downtime event.

**Relevant Procedures**

Consider creating formal procedure documents that reinforce and support the policy statements above. Note, it is best practice to house policies and procedures in separate documents to keep the content focused and reduce the number of times the policy must be reapproved by senior management.

# Non-Compliance

Clearly describe consequences (legal and/or disciplinary) for employee non-compliance with the policy. It may be pertinent to describe the escalation process for repeated non-compliance.

Violations of this policy will be treated like other allegations of wrongdoing at [Company Name]. Allegations of misconduct will be adjudicated according to established procedures. Sanctions for non-compliance may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

1. Disciplinary action according to applicable [Company Name] policies;
2. Termination of employment; and/or
3. Legal action according to applicable laws and contractual agreements.

# Agreement

Include a section that confirms understanding and agreement to comply with the policy. Both signatures and dates are required. A sample statement is provided below.

I have read and understand the [name of policy]. I understand that if I violate the rules explained herein, I may face legal or disciplinary action according to applicable laws or company policy.

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Employee Name

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Employee Signature Date

# Revision History

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| **Version ID** | **Date of Change** | **Author** | **Rationale** |
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