

Earlier this week, U.S. Army G-1 officials participated in a Twitter chat to address concerns about sequestration, which officially started 1 Mar 2013.

While we deal with the challenges that require us to be better stewards of our resources, we still have to take care of the mission, our Soldiers, our civilians and our families.

Rest assured that as soon as decisions are made about the future impacts of sequestration, information will be shared on official U.S. Army channels (Army.mil, Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube).

As a recap of Wednesday's Twitter chat, below are answers to some of the frequently asked questions,

**Q:** What is sequestration?

<https://twitter.com/jbIIIcounting/status/306817797260967936>

**A:** Sequestration is an across-the-board reduction in Federal budgetary resources in all budget accounts that have not been exempted by statute. Under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended by the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, across-the-board reductions are scheduled to take place Mar. 1, 2013. This sequestration will reduce each agency's budgetary resources in non-exempt accounts for the remainder of the fiscal years (which runs through September 30, 2013).

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**Q:** What items are exempt from sequestration?

**A:** Pay and allowances exempt from sequestration include: active-duty military pay and allowances, drill pay, retiree pay, Veterans' disability benefits, and survivor benefits.

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**Q:** Will all civilians be furloughed?

**A:** Most civilians will be furloughed with few exceptions: (1) those deployed in a combat zone, (2) those who protect the safety of life or property to the extent needed, (3) non-appropriated fund employees (NAF), (4) those exempt by law who hold a presidential appointment with Senate confirmation (PAS), (5) foreign nationals, and (6) those excepted as approved by a 2-star flag officer or tier 2 SES, or higher.

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**Q:** Will furloughs continue past the end of the fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2013)?

<https://twitter.com/30KarenB/status/306804689498955776>

**A:** The Department of Defense cannot predict at this time the impact of sequestration on the civilian workforce beyond Sept 30, 2013. We are utilizing and will continue to utilize all available workforce shaping tools to minimize impact on our civilian workforce to the extent possible. SOURCE: <http://www.army.mil/article/96832>

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Q: How will the furlough affect civilians who are currently deployed to combat zones?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306801371586379776>

A: We will NOT furlough civilians deployed in combat zones. SOURCE:

<http://1.usa.gov/Xybqt2>

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Q: How much notice will non-SES employees receive prior to a furlough?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306817771138863105>

A: All affected employees will be provided at least 30 days' notice prior to executing a furlough. There is also a requirement for reasonable advance union notice, with time to bargain.

[http://www.army.mil/article/96827/SecDef\\_on\\_Sequestration\\_and\\_Furlough/](http://www.army.mil/article/96827/SecDef_on_Sequestration_and_Furlough/)

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Q: How is time on a furlough documented?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306814588647796736>

A: An SF-50, "Notification of Personnel Action," must be prepared for each individual subject to furlough.

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Q: Can an employee choose when they are furloughed?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306915895626854400>

A: Generally, furloughs will be no more than 22 discontinuous work days (176 hours), and will be spread over maximum months at no more than 16 hours per pay period. Your unit/command will choose furlough days.

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Q: Could an employee take paid leave or other forms of paid time off (e.g., annual, sick, court leave, earned credit hours, etc.) instead of taking administrative furlough time off?

A: No, approved annual, sick, court leave, etc., for a day which is later designated as a furlough day will be recorded as a furlough and the employee will be placed in a nonpay status for the day.

<http://www.army.mil/article/96832>

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Q: If I am furloughed am I eligible to receive unemployment compensation benefits. Is the claim based on the state where you live, or where you work?

<https://twitter.com/kebeino/status/306820897019420672>

A: Unemployment compensation claims are based on the state in which the work was performed (this does not include overseas employees). Visit

<http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/unemcomp.asp> for more information.

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Q: Will I receive back pay for the period of time I am subject to a furlough?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306814235919396864>

A: It's not guaranteed. Congress would have to pass legislation granting federal employees the pay they missed while they were furloughed. This is what has happened in the past.

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**Q:** While furloughed, can I work somewhere else?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306806632443158529>

**A:** Even while on furlough, you are still a government employee and must still abide by outside employment rules. According to the “code of ethics” an employee shall not engage in outside employment or any other outside activity that conflicts with their official duties.

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**Q:** Will health benefits continue for furloughed personnel?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306807708957413376>

**A:** Yes, civilian healthcare insurance premiums and claims will be paid in full and on time, and benefits will continue for furloughed employees.

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**Q:** I am an Army family needing financial assistance. Who do I contact?

**A:** Please contact the Army Emergency Relief fund:

<http://www.aerhq.org/dnn563/FinancialAssistance.aspx>

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**Q:** How will sequestration affect Permanent Changes of Station (PCS)?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306822837463810048>

**A:** Permanent change of station (PCS) in the interest of the Government must be funded. However, PCS authorized relocations may be restricted and used only in rare and unusual circumstances. Additionally, when PCS is determined necessary, optional expenses (house hunting trip, temporary quarters, etc.) may be restricted or prohibited. SOURCE:

<http://www.army.mil/article/96832>

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**Q:** Will medical care access be available at military treatment facilities during the furlough?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306821931833884673>

**A:** Medical care will still be available although civilian personnel furloughs may result in reduced, including longer wait times and fewer personnel available to provide care.

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**Q:** How will sequestration affect Department of Defense Educational Activity operations?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306819305893416961>

**A:** The Department intends to implement sequestration in a manner that preserves the ability to provide students a full school year of academic credit, including completion of final exams, and to maintain school accreditation standards.

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**Q:** Are commissary hours affected by sequestration?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306825314317762560>

**A:** The impact to commissary hours is not yet known. The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) is developing an internal contingency plan to minimize the impact to commissary patrons, should sequestration occur. Visit the DeCA website for commissary locations, contact information and news updates:

<http://www.commissaries.com/>

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**Q:** How will this affect the National Guard & U.S. Army Reserve? Will troops still drill?

<https://twitter.com/USArmy/status/306812934682714112>

**A:**

\*The pay for the MILTECH personnel category resides in the O&M appropriations which have a great impact on unit's ability to perform effective drill weekends. Civilian furloughs will affect all Reserve components.

\*Civilian furloughs will have a greater impact on the Military Technicians (MILTECH) in the National Guard and the Army Reserve.

\*National Guard and Reserve components should be able to drill; however, furloughs will have a negative impact on drilling effectiveness and readiness.

\*Potential effects on the National Guard are outlined here: <http://1.usa.gov/15h0YJT>

For additional resources and information, please bookmark and visit the sites listed below:

\*U.S. Army Civilian Personnel Policy Guidance and Clarification for Army-wide Hiring Freeze and Release of Terms and Temporary Civilian Personnel

\*Administrative Furlough Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

\*Department of Defense Administrative Furlough FAQs (Updated 26-Feb-2013)

\*Secretary of Defense Memorandum Dated 20-Feb-2013: Preparations for Potential Sequestration on March 1 and Furlough Notifications

\*U.S. Office of Personnel Management Furlough Guidance

\*Sequestration Resources

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