



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Office of the Court Administrator
Manila

OCA CIRCULAR NO. 354-2023

TO : ALL EXECUTIVE JUDGES

**SUBJECT : NOTICE ON AND/OR APPROVAL OF WORK
SUSPENSION OR EARLY DISMISSAL**

A. Courts outside Metro Manila

In A.M. No. 10-4-13-SC dated 10 August 2010 (*Providing for the Further Delegation of Approaching Thresholds and Authorities to the Heads of Decentralized Units*) and OCA Circular No. 51-2020 dated 5 February 2020 (*Notice on Work Suspension*), it was cited therein to grant Executive Judges of courts outside Metro Manila with the authority to suspend work or order an early dismissal, as follows:

“1) Suspension of work shall be within the purview of the CHIEF JUSTICE, in line with existing rules and procedure; Provided, however, that in the absence of an announcement from the national or local government and under certain circumstances, authority shall likewise be granted to the Executive Judges of the courts outside Metro Manila xxx. The following guidelines shall be observed:

- (a) In case of typhoons declared as Signal No. 1 or Signal No. 2 there shall be **no** suspension of work;
- (b) In case of typhoon declared as Signal No. 3, suspension of work shall be subject to the **discretion** of the Executive Judge, **with notice to the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA)**; and
- (c) In case of (i) flash floods, with or without a typhoon, (ii) transport strikes and other large-scale public strikes and/or rallies, and (iii) other situations necessitating suspension of work, the suspension shall be subject to the **discretion** of the Executive Judge, **with notice to the OCA xxx.**” (emphasis supplied)

To clarify the delegated authority given to the Executive Judges of the courts outside Metro Manila, the following should be taken into account:

(1) When there is an announcement from the national or local government for a work suspension or early dismissal, the basis thereof should be furnished the OCA, or the concerned Deputy Court Administrators (DCA) or Assistant Court Administrators (ACA), before any Memorandum or announcement is issued by the Executive Judge to suspend work or declare an early dismissal;

(2) When there is no announcement from the national or local government, a report on the situation affecting the concerned courts should be submitted by the Executive Judge to the OCA through the email address oca.sc@judiciary.gov.ph or the email addresses of the concerned DCA or ACA, to enable these offices to verify the need for work suspension or early dismissal; and

(3) As non-Executive Judges have not been authorized to suspend work or dismiss early, Presiding Judges of first or second level courts should implement a work suspension or an early dismissal after referring the need for the same through their respective Executive Judges who have jurisdiction over them on operational matter. Any action thereon by the concerned Executive Judge, or by the Vice-Executive in the absence of the latter, should be in accordance with the preceding items 1 or 2. In the extreme event that the Executive Judge, or the Vice-Executive Judge for multi-sala RTCs, is unavailable, the affected first or second level court may directly coordinate with the concerned DCA or ACA.

B. Courts within Metro Manila

On the other hand, for courts *within* Metro Manila, suspension of work shall be within the purview of the CHIEF JUSTICE. Thus, whenever there is an announcement from the concerned local government unit on early dismissal or work suspension, the Executive Judges thereat should still seek prior approval from the Honorable Court, through the OCA, before the same is imposed.

C. Common Provisions

- (1) Lawyers, court users, and litigants should always be notified of any postponed/cancelled hearing/proceeding;
- (2) When necessary or practicable, a skeleton workforce should be maintained in each court or office;
- (3) The Disaster Reportorial and Response Mechanisms provided in OCA Circular No. 262A-2022¹ dated 5 October 2022, if applicable, must be observed; and

¹ Creation of the Office of the Court Administrator Central Disaster Coordination, Monitoring and Response Team (OCA CDCMRT)

(4) All concerned Executive Judges are reminded that any abuse of the prerogative to suspend work or dismiss early, including not following the above guidelines, may subject him/her to disciplinary action.

For strict compliance.

19 October 2023



RAUL B. VILLANUEVA
Court Administrator