



Administrative Policy
Electronic Timekeeping Policy

A.P. No.	A.P 2-4
Effective Date:	Upon Approval

1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City of Houston to use an electronic timekeeping system for the purposes of managing the official time records of City employees.

2. POLICY PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to City employees and supervisors regarding use of the electronic timekeeping system.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to timekeeping records of all City employees, including classified employees in the Houston Fire Department (HFD) and Houston Police Department (HPD).

4. DEFINITIONS

Buddy Punching: When someone modifies their own, or has another person modify their or another person’s timecard, whether electronically or manually. Such action may include clocking into the electronic timekeeping system for an employee who is not at work at that time.

Exempt Employees: All employees of the City of Houston who are exempted from the overtime compensation requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and the pertinent regulations and opinions interpreting that Act. and who have been designated as such by the Human Resources Department and the Civil Service Commission.

Geofencing: The use of GPS and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology to create geographic areas and boundaries to trigger an alert when a person or device enters a demarcated area or boundary.

GPS: Global Positioning System (GPS): A satellite-based navigational system that transmits and determines a person’s or object’s geographical location..

Holiday: A date that City Council has declared as a City holiday.

Non-exempt Employee: All employees who are not exempt (see “exempt employee” above) and are designated by job classification.

Overtime: Any hours worked during a work week in excess of 40 hours actually worked on paid leave, or observing an official City Holiday.

Riding the Clock: Term used for an employee who has begun the shift but who is not working and/or is spending an excessive amount of time on personal or other non-working related matters.

Stealing Time: Receiving pay for time not actually worked. Examples might include but are not limited to: clocking in before arriving to work; leaving work and clocking out remotely; altering or requesting time records to be altered such that compensation will be paid when not at the work location; buddy punching, riding the clock, or performing work outside employment while on the clock for the City. This definition does not generally

apply to an employee who is at work but unproductive.

Timekeepers: An employee designated by their respective department who is responsible for ensuring accurate records they have been assigned to within the electronic timekeeping system.

5. POLICY DETAILS

- 5.1. All non-exempt employees are required to clock in before performing any work.
- 5.2. Non-exempt employees are prohibited from performing any work after clocking out.
- 5.3. Forgetting to clock in and out is not a legitimate reason for working off the clock.
- 5.4. Intentional or careless working off the clock is prohibited.
- 5.5. Employees who underreport or fail to report hours worked are subject to corrective action.
- 5.6. Supervisors, at any level, who knowingly allow employees to underreport or fail to report hours worked by employees will also be subject to corrective action.
- 5.7. The only person who may clock in or out for the employee is the individual employee, unless there was a time clock malfunction, network problem of the electronic time clock system/application or accidental oversight by the employee and then section 5.8 of this policy will prevail.
 - 5.7.1. Using someone else's card or clocking in for someone else is considered, at minimum, to be theft of City time and/or falsification of a government record.
- 5.8. If an employee is unable to clock in or out because of a time clock malfunction, network/application problem, or accidental oversight by the employee, it is the employee's responsibility to inform the appropriate supervisor or timekeeper in writing for the appropriate action to record the employee's time worked.
- 5.9. Once an employee has clocked in, they shall begin work.
- 5.10. "Riding the clock" is considered not working and is grounds for corrective action.
- 5.11. Any overtime work must be: Approved by an employee's supervisor before overtime hours are worked
 - 5.11.1. Carefully monitored by a supervisor; and
 - 5.11.2. Shown as reviewed by the supervisor in the electronic timekeeping system to indicate approval.
- 5.12. Before authorizing overtime, the supervisor is responsible for verifying that funds are budgeted and available.
- 5.13. All leave requests such as vacation, sick, personal, floating or accrued holiday(s), etc. must be submitted through the electronic timekeeping system, by the employee, supervisor or other appropriate person (i.e., timekeeper, payroll representative, etc.).
- 5.14. Records supporting eligibility to use Jury Duty, leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), etc. shall be provided to the employee's supervisor and denoted in the electronic timekeeping system appropriately.
- 5.15. All employees using the City's electronic timekeeping system shall review and approve their electronic timesheets before the payroll due date via electronic timekeeping system.

- 5.16. The electronic timekeeping system has the capability of providing employees, supervisors and managers with various reports, including those which show irregularities, problems or abuses of the system.
- 5.17. During an audit, various reports and records shall be reviewed to reconcile the electronic timekeeping system's data.
- 5.18. Falsification, tampering, unauthorized viewing, and other attempts to manipulate the electronic timekeeping system is strictly prohibited.
- 5.19. Corrective action, up to and including indefinite suspension or termination, may result for engaging in any of the following conduct:
 - 5.19.1. Any attempt to tamper with the electronic timekeeping system software or hardware;
 - 5.19.2. Buddy Punching;
 - 5.19.3. Clocking in or out remotely using the electronic timekeeping system's mobile application without prior authorization;
 - 5.19.4. Clocking in using the electronic timekeeping system's mobile application before you arrive at your work location;
 - 5.19.5. Leaving your work location/area before the end of your shift and clocking out using the electronic timekeeping system's mobile application from an unauthorized location;
 - 5.19.6. Any other violation of Geofencing parameters.
 - 5.19.7. Interfering with other employees' use of the electronic timekeeping system;
 - 5.19.8. Unauthorized viewing of another employee's time in the electronic timekeeping system; and
 - 5.19.9. Any and all other attempts to defraud, steal time, or otherwise lie, cheat for oneself or any other person or employee, regardless of whether that person is identified.
 - 5.19.10. No employee shall use another employee's credentials to the electronic timekeeping system for clocking in, out or approving any leave requests or time records.
- 5.20. Payroll will run based off data from the electronic timekeeping system and shall not be delayed due to an employee's or supervisor's failure to ensure the electronic timekeeping system data was accurate for an employee's time records.
- 5.21. City employees are authorized to approve time records in the electronic timekeeping system.
- 5.22. Delegation of Authority
 - 5.22.1. Delegation of authority is *not* the same as delegation of a password. Sharing of a password is prohibited.
 - 5.22.2. Supervisors/managers may delegate their authority in the timekeeping

system as designated in 5.22.3 within their own department during times of absence (e.g., vacation, sick, FMLA, PTO.) or for business operational needs. The delegation feature within the electronic timekeeping system logs the ID in the audit records of both the supervisor of record and the delegate on each transaction during this period. Responsibility for the accuracy of approved timecards remains with the supervisor.

5.22.3. Supervisors/managers may delegate their authority to a staff member, including a non-supervisor, regardless of supervisor absence. Responsibility for the accuracy of approved timecards shall remain with the supervisor.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department's Payroll Division responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

6.1.1. Closing the pay period according to a preset schedule to ensure that time adjustments and leave taken are properly recorded;

6.1.2. Relying on supervisors and timekeepers to resolve all missed punches or shifts, leave taken, holidays, etc. and to approve each employee's time records within scheduled deadlines;

6.1.3. Notifying supervisors of any missed punches or pay leaves prior to the close of each pay period; and

6.1.4. Identifying and reviewing all irregularities with time records and/or patterns with the appropriate supervisor and/or timekeepers.

6.2. Supervisor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

6.2.1. Reviewing, approving and reconciling time records at the end of each payroll period;

6.2.2. Retaining copies documenting eligibility to use code Jury Duty, FMLA, etc. for four (4) years in compliance with the City's payroll records retention policy; and

6.2.3. Authorizing overtime, prior to the employee beginning to work overtime, based on the needs of the business operations and verifying that funds are budgeted for overtime and available.

6.3. Employees responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

6.3.1. Reviewing and complying with department policies and procedures regarding the use of an electronic timekeeping system.

7. PROCEDURES

7.1. As determined by the department director, an employee may be authorized to clock in and out (1) at a computer, (2) at a time clock, if available and/or (3) using the mobile timekeeping application. Geofencing parameters using the mobile timekeeping application are determined by the department director and will be used to identify an employee's authorized work location.

7.1.1. With approval, under certain conditions (e.g., training at an off-site location, off-site for City Business, etc.) employees may 1) report time worked to their supervisor or timekeeper in writing; 2) use on-site time clocks; or 3) make use of the electronic timekeeping system's mobile application.

7.2. As a default, clock in and out times are rounded as follows:

7.2.1. Clock in and clock out punches will be rounded to the nearest 15 minutes.

7.2.1.1. This rounding does not authorize employees to arrive late or leave early.

7.2.1.2. Arriving late and leaving early will be addressed by actual punch time and not the rounded punch time.

7.2.2. Meal breaks will be rounded to the nearest 15 minutes (the system rounds the period, not the punch).

7.2.3. Some departments may have minor variations of the above rounding policies as documented by an internal department specific policy.

7.2.4. Employees are expected to work their scheduled amount of hours daily.

7.3. Employees shall have until 4 p.m. on the fifth calendar day from the date payroll closes to file a dispute, in writing with their immediate supervisor.

7.3.1. The dispute shall be properly documented by the supervisor, signed by both parties, and submitted for filing in the employee's department file.

7.3.1.1. If the employee refuses to sign the documentation, the supervisor should note this accordingly in the paperwork.

7.3.2. If the dispute cannot be resolved by the use a security camera footage, other evidence will be considered, such as security entrance records, City computer login records, the IP address of each clock transaction, witnesses, computer work, employee badge swipes, Geofencing, etc.

7.4. Department directors shall review the specific details of all timekeeping violations and impose the appropriate corrective action.

7.5. Any employee who becomes aware of any alleged violations of this policy shall report the alleged violations to their immediate supervisor, manager, Human Resources Department Employee Relations liaison or the Office of the Inspector General.

8. CONFLICT AND REPEAL

8.1. This Administrative Procedure supersedes Administrative Procedure 2-4, Electronic Timekeeping Policy, dated December 18, 2023, which shall be of no further force or effect.

8.2. If the provisions of this policy conflict with any law that law shall prevail.

9. RELATED DOCUMENTS

AP 3-7: Positive Corrective Action Program

AP 8-1: Acceptable Use of City Data, Information Systems

AP 8-4: Password Policy

10. POLICY SPONSOR

Department: Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department