

Federal workers face grim prospect of lengthy shutdown

By JULIET LINDERMAN
AND LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three days, maybe four. That’s how long Ethan James, 21, says he can realistically miss work before he’s struggling.

So as the partial government shutdown stretched into its sixth day with no end in sight, James, a minimum-wage contractor sidelined from his job as an office worker at the Interior Department, was worried. “I live check to check right now,” he said, and risks missing his rent or phone payment.

Contractors, unlike most federal employees, may never get back pay for being idled. “I’m getting nervous,” he said.

Federal workers and contractors forced to stay home or work without pay are experiencing mounting stress from the impasse affecting hundreds of thousands of them. For those without a financial cushion, even a few days of lost wages during the shutdown over President Donald Trump’s border wall could have dire consequences.

As well, the disruption is starting to pinch citizens who count on a variety of public services, beyond those who’ve been finding gates closed at national parks. For example, the government won’t issue new federal flood insurance policies or renew expiring ones.

Trump and congressional leaders appear no closer to a resolution over his demand for \$5 billion for the border wall that could now push the shutdown into the new year. The House and Senate gavled in for a perfunctory session Thursday, but quickly adjourned without action. No votes are expected until next week, and even that’s



A lone U.S. Park Police officer stands watch at the Lincoln Memorial on Thursday in Washington, during a partial government shutdown.

not guaranteed. Lawmakers are mostly away for the holidays and will be given 24-hour notice to return, with Republican senators saying they won’t vote until all parties, including Trump, agree to a deal.

The president spent part of the day tweeting about the shutdown, insisting “this isn’t about the Wall,” but about Democrats denying him “a win.”

“Do the Dems realize that most of the people not getting paid are Democrats?” he asked in one tweet, citing no evidence for that claim. That earned him a reprimand from Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, who tweeted: “Federal employees don’t go to work wearing red or blue jerseys. They’re public servants.”

Roughly federal 420,000 workers were deemed essential and are work-

ing unpaid, unable to take any sick days or vacation. An additional 380,000 are staying home without pay. While furloughed federal workers have been given back pay in previous shutdowns, it’s not guaranteed. The Senate passed a bill last week to make sure workers will be paid. The House will probably follow suit.

The longer the shutdown lasts, the more government activities will grind to a halt. It’s already caused a lapse in money for nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice.

Many national parks have closed while some have limited facilities. The National Flood Insurance Program announced it will no longer renew or issue policies

during the shutdown.

“I think it’s obvious that until the president decides he can sign something — or something is presented to him — that we are where we are,” said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., who opened the Senate for the minutes-long session. “We just have to get through this.”

House Democrats tried Thursday to offer a measure to re-open government, but they were blocked from action by Republicans, who still have majority control of the chamber until Democrats take over Jan. 3.

“Unfortunately, 800,000 federal workers are in a panic because they don’t know whether they’ll get paid,” said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., who tried to offer the bill. “That may make the president feel good but the rest of us should be terribly bothered by that, and should

work on overtime to end the shutdown now.”

Government contractors like James, placed indefinitely on unpaid leave, don’t get compensated for lost hours.

James said the contracting company he works for gave its employees a choice: take unpaid leave or dip into paid time-off entitlements. But James doesn’t have any paid time off because he started the job just four months ago. His only option is forgoing a paycheck.

“This is my full-time job, this is what I was putting my time into until I can save up to take a few classes,” said James, who plans to study education and become a teacher. “I’m going to have to look for something else to sustain me.”

Mary Morrow, a components engineer on contract for NASA, is in the

same predicament. In addition to caring for a family largely on her own, she’s got a mortgage.

“I have three teenage boys, it’s near Christmas time and we just spent money, there are credit card bills and normal bills and it’s really nerve-wracking,” she said. “It’s scary.”

As federal employees tell their stories on Twitter under the hashtag #Shutdownstories, Trump has claimed that federal workers are behind him, saying many have told him “stay out until you get the funding for the wall.” He didn’t say whom he had heard from, and he did not explain the incongruity of also believing that most are Democrats.

Steve Reaves, president of Federal Emergency Management Agency union, said he hasn’t heard from any employees who say they support the shutdown.

“They’re all by far worried about their mortgages,” Reaves said.

Reaves said the shutdown could have consequences that stretch beyond a temporary suspension of salary. Many federal government jobs require a security clearance, he said, and missed mortgage payments or deepening debt could hurt their clearance.

David Dollard, a Federal Bureau of Prisons employee and chief steward for the American Federation of Government Employees Local 709 union in Colorado, said at least two agency employees lost their homes after the 2013 shutdown suspended their salaries. Bureau of Prisons employees are considered essential, and must work without pay. The agency is already understaffed, Dollard said. Shutdown conditions make everything worse.

Neighbor: New owners of 11th Street Store find community in customers, neighbors

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Though the first year of running a store doesn’t allow for much free time or travel, Koo said they enjoy taking their children to the local parks.

“It’s more pedestrian-friendly than the coast,” he said. “My parents walk up the Butte every day.”

Though many people in

his family, and his wife’s, have operated convenience stores, it was one job Koo had never done. Instead, he’d spent years traveling and working in different fields. Most recently, he lived in Newport and owned a commercial fishing boat, harvesting hagfish. That industry has a lot of ups and downs, he said, and it’s hard to succeed.

“We heard about the mar-

ket for sale out here through family friends,” he said. After coming to Hermiston to check out the community, they decided they could raise their family here, and moved to the area.

But Koo’s life and career has spanned several industries and continents.

He ran a clothing factory in Ecuador, and lived in Mexico for about a year. He

studied business in France, taught in South Korea, and then went to the Philippines. There, he met his wife, and their first son was born. Koo is of Korean descent. He and his wife talk to their children about their heritage.

“Kyle, what are you?” He asked his son, who was sitting on his lap and watching a video.

“Half Korean, half Fili-

pino, and fully percent American,” the six-year old said.

He said for him and his family, Hermiston is the ideal size, with the amenities of a larger city but the pace of a smaller one.

“I’ve lived in metropolises, with hundreds of miles of paved roads,” he said. “And it all kind of looks the same. I’ve lived in really small towns — Neah Bay,

Clallam Bay.”

Those places were a bit too small, he said, especially lacking in their ability to draw young people.

But he said there have been similarities in every place he’s lived.

“I had to travel around the world to learn that essential fact,” he said. “If you just want to live a nice life, you can do it anywhere.”

Drones: UAS companies beginning to staff permanent positions in Pendleton

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efficient and safe, battery life expands, and regulatory constraints are reduced, new business models will begin to develop, thus enhancing robust supply-side responses,” the forecast states.

City officials believe that Pendleton has put itself in a good position to take advantage of these trends, and the range has already met or is on its way to meeting some of its goals.

The range got money from the state to build a new hangar, and in order to have \$1 million in loans forgiven, it will need to generate 165,000 in total labor hours at the range by April 2022.

Having already recorded nearly 20,000 labor hours

going into 2018, range officials projected 35,000 hours by the end of the year. Range Manager Darryl Abling now says the range will surpass 60,000 labor hours in 2018 alone.

Opinion was split about Chrisman’s September prediction in a city council meeting that the range would generate \$1 million in revenue by the end of the fiscal year in June.

Chrisman wasn’t ready to reaffirm his prediction, but Abling thought the range could do it.

Revenue will be important for the range going forward as a grant covering the two range employees’ salaries will expire next year. Chrisman said he expects the revenue the range generates from services will cover that expense.



A3 tested their air taxi vehicle for the first time at the Pendleton UAS Range on January 31, 2018.

Much of the activity at the range has centered around big clients like PAE and A^3, the Airbus subsidiary that started testing its air taxi project this year.

Chrisman said these companies and others like

them are beginning to convert transient positions into permanent ones based in Pendleton.

Although many of these new employees come from elsewhere, Chrisman highlighted a former test

range intern who was able to secure a job with PAE after a stint in the Oregon National Guard.

“We’ll have more interns and push them through the pipeline,” Abling said.

While city officials have long touted the drone companies’ impact on local restaurants and hotels, Chrisman said other businesses are seeing a benefit.

Renovations and maintenance to the companies facilities means more work for cleaners, electricians, and welders. More operations mean drone testers need to hire plane and helicopter pilots. Abling said 2019 should see tests from some of the range’s original customers, like the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and relatively

newer clients like Cubic Corp., a San Diego-based defense and transportation contractor that recently rented a hangar at the Pendleton airport.

Hangar space is at a premium at the airport, and the question remains who will pay for them.

The city is still waiting on word about a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to build new hangars, and Chrisman said drone technology is still too new for companies to be willing to privately invest in hangars themselves.

Regardless of some of the open questions, Abling is optimistic about the range’s future.

“In five years, it’s going to look amazing,” he said.

Panhandling: Cities have limited options in addressing panhandling

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have the option to contact law enforcement and trespass the person from their property.

“There needs to be some kind of incident or incidents to justify that,” he said. “It’s all based on what’s reasonable.”

The city also has an ordinance that prohibits people from blocking a public sidewalk, so if a panhandler’s possessions are piled

up on the sidewalk next to them police can ask them to move.

While cities’ blanket bans on panhandling (or other kinds of “charitable solicitations”) have been struck down in court, many cities do have ordinances that address certain behaviors associated with panhandling. In 2015, for example, the city of Umatilla passed an ordinance banning the transfer of money or other items between a vehicle in

a highway’s lane of travel and a pedestrian. While people are still legally allowed to stand on the side of the highway and ask for money, anyone who wants to donate must find somewhere to legally park their vehicle first.

Edmiston said there has been a definite increase in panhandling recently in Hermiston, particularly with panhandlers who aggressively approach people. In some cases, he said,

the people have a “sob story” that police know for a fact isn’t true, such as a person with no children asking for money for a hotel room for their children. He said the department has had some conversations about whether such a false story constitutes “theft by deception,” but have not chosen to charge anyone so far.

There are some people who truly do need the money and are being hon-

est about their circumstances, Edmiston said, but giving to the organizations that serve the area’s low-income and homeless populations is generally a better way to make sure the money is used efficiently to help people in real need. If people do want to give money or food to someone “in the field,” he said, they should find somewhere safe and well-lit to do so.

“I would just say, be smart,” he said.

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