

Musk Says Government Workers Must Detail Their Workweek or Lose Their Jobs

Elon Musk has drawn inspiration from his 2022 takeover of Twitter with the tactic. His threat on social media of termination did not appear in an email to federal workers requesting the work summaries.

**By Kate Conger, Eileen Sullivan and Christina Jewett
New York Times**

Elon Musk deepened the confusion and alarm of workers across the federal government Saturday by ordering them to summarize their accomplishments for the week, warning that a failure to do so would be taken as a resignation.

Shortly after Mr. Musk's demand, which he posted on X, civil servants across the government received an email from the Office of Personnel Management with the subject line, "What did you do last week?"

The missive simultaneously hit inboxes across multiple agencies, rattling workers who had been rocked by layoffs in recent weeks and were unsure about whether to respond to Mr. Musk's demand. Officials at some agencies, including the F.B.I. and the State Department, told their employees to pause responses to the email.

Mr. Musk's mounting pressure on the federal work force came at the encouragement of President Trump, who has been trumpeting how the billionaire has upended the bureaucracy and on Saturday urged him to be even "more aggressive."

In his post on X, Mr. Musk said employees who failed to answer the message would lose their jobs. However, that threat was not stated in the email itself.

"Please reply to this email with approx. 5 bullets of what you accomplished this week and cc your manager," said the Office of Personnel Management message that went out to federal employees on Saturday afternoon. The email told employees to respond by midnight on Monday and not to include classified information.

The email was received by workers across the government, including at the F.B.I., the State Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Office of Personnel Management, the Food and Drug Administration, the Veterans Affairs Department, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, according to copies seen by The New York Times.

Some agency leaders welcomed Mr. Musk's move. "DOGE and Elon are doing great work! Historic. We are happy to participate," Ed Martin, [the interim U.S. attorney](#) for Washington, D.C., whom Mr. Trump has nominated to run the office on a permanent basis, wrote in a message to his staff.

But in a sign of the upheaval and the potential legal and security issues caused by the demand, officials at some federal agencies told their staff to hold off on responding and await further guidance.

Among them was [Kash Patel](#), the new F.B.I. director. "The F.B.I., through the Office of the Director, is in charge of all of our review processes, and will conduct reviews in accordance with F.B.I. procedures," Mr. Patel wrote in an email to staff obtained by The Times. "When and if further information is required, we will coordinate the responses. For now, please pause any responses."

For rank-and-file workers, the latest move by Mr. Musk underscored a climate of instability and fear inside the government. One staff member at the National Institutes of Health, who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation, said she was shocked by the message, which she said left her with a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach. When she found out more of the context, she said, she messaged a colleague: "They're terrorizing us."

As confusion and alarm spread on Saturday evening among workers over Mr. Musk's demand, he said on X that there was a "low bar" to meet it.

"An email with some bullet points that make any sense at all is acceptable!" he said. "Should take less than 5 mins to write."

In response to his threat of dismissal if workers did not comply, the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal employee union, said it would challenge any "unlawful" terminations.

Everett Kelley, the union's president, accused Mr. Musk and Mr. Trump of showing "utter disdain" for federal employees.

"It is cruel and disrespectful," he said in a statement, "to hundreds of thousands of veterans who are wearing their second uniform in the civil service to be forced to justify their job duties to this out-of-touch, privileged, unelected billionaire who has never performed one single hour of honest public service in his life."

The union told workers that it "strongly believes" the Office of Personnel Management did not have the authority to direct employees in the manner of its emailed request and advised them to seek guidance from a supervisor.

The demands raised significant legal issues, experts said.

“There is zero basis in the civil service system for this,” said Sam Bagenstos, a law professor at the University of Michigan and a former general counsel to the Office of Management and Budget. “This is obviously designed to intimidate employees. Musk and DOGE and the Trump administration are persistently acting in a way that disregards civil service rules and they are just counting on the courts not being able to catch up and clean up after them.

“They are counting on employees saying, ‘This is too much, I can’t keep doing this,’” he added.

The message questioning workers’ output repeated a tactic Mr. Musk used to cull the work force at his social media company. He has repeatedly drawn inspiration from his 2022 takeover of X, then known as Twitter, as he works to overhaul the federal government with his so-called Department of Government Efficiency. With the support of the Trump administration, Mr. Musk has ordered layoffs across the federal government and effectively shuttered several agencies.

“Elon is doing a great job, but I would like to see him be more aggressive,” Mr. Trump said in a post Saturday on his social media site.

Mr. Musk quickly accepted the challenge. “All federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week,” Mr. Musk wrote in a social media post on Saturday, saying his actions were “consistent” with the president’s demands. “Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation,” he added.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the email to federal workers, and whether workers would be fired if they did not reply.

The Office of Personnel Management, which sent Mr. Musk’s deferred resignation offer to employees with the subject line “Fork in the Road” last month, sidestepped the question.

“As part of the Trump administration’s commitment to an efficient and accountable federal work force, O.P.M. is asking employees to provide a brief summary of what they did last week by the end of Monday, cc’ing their manager,” McLaurine Pinover, a spokeswoman for the agency, said in a statement on Saturday. “Agencies will determine any next steps.”

The demand left many workers reeling.

Most of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s work force had recently been placed on leave as Mr. Musk gutted the agency, and have been instructed not to work — leaving them with no accomplishments to report, a worker there said.

Mr. Musk’s allies in government have [suggested using artificial intelligence](#) to identify budget cuts, and workers at several agencies worried their responses would be assessed by A.I.

The approach echoed one Mr. Musk took with executives and employees at Twitter. In April 2022, Mr. Musk was set to join the board at the social media company, but bickered with Parag Agrawal, its chief executive at the time, over his public criticism of the company. When Mr. Agrawal asked Mr. Musk not to post detrimental things about Twitter, Mr. Musk responded in a text, “What did you get done this week?” and then told Mr. Agrawal he would buy Twitter outright.

The exchange led to Mr. Musk’s \$44 billion takeover of the company, which he completed in October 2022. Mr. Musk claimed he fired Mr. Agrawal immediately, although Mr. Agrawal contested the circumstances of his departure and [sued Mr. Musk](#) for withholding severance payments.

Shortly after the acquisition, Mr. Musk told employees to print out code they had written recently — an exercise intended to prove how hard they worked. When executives at the company raised privacy concerns, Mr. Musk instructed employees to shred the code they had printed.

On Saturday, Mr. Musk acknowledged the similarities. “Parag got nothing done. Parag was fired,” he wrote in an X post about the message he intended to send to federal workers.