U.S. General Services Administration

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions – Telework

What are the Latest Figures on Federal Teleworkers?

Answer: *The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued "The Status of Telework in the Federal Government" in August 2009. Survey results indicate that 102,900 Federal employees teleworked at least once per month during 2008. This figure represents 8.67 percent of the eligible Federal workforce.* Nearly 64% of these employees teleworked at least one day per week.*

You may find the full OPM report at **www.telework.gov**.

**For this study, the Federal workforce was defined as civilian, non-Postal employee.*

Who is Responsible for Approving an Employee's Request to Telework?

Answer: *Each Federal agency is responsible for developing its own approval process within the framework established by Public Law 106-346, Section 359, and OPM's interpretation of the law. Generally, most telework requests are referred to the immediate supervisor for approval and may be reviewed through the accepted management channels of the agency. Some agencies, however, have established working committees with review and approval authority regarding employee telework requests.*

What Role do Unions Play in the Development of Telework Programs?

Answer: *Agencies are strongly encouraged to involve unions and other stakeholders in the development of their programs. Teleworking affects conditions of employment and agencies should consult and negotiate with unions, as appropriate, regarding teleworking programs.*

Does an Employee Have a Right to Telework? Could an Employee be Forced to Work at Home?

Answer: *An employee may be eligible to telework in accordance with Public Law 106-346, Section 359 (see* http://www.telework.gov/Guidance_and_Legislation/Telework_Legislation/index.aspx)*, depending upon the duties of his/her position, performance, and any applicable union agreement. Either the employee or his/her manager may terminate the telework arrangement if circumstances change or performance declines.*

An employee may not generally be required to telework unless it is a condition of employment or it is necessary as a means of continuing Government operations during times of emergency. At these times, an employee may be required to work at home, a telework center, or an alternative worksite.

Won't the Employee's Work Suffer Without Direct, On-Site Supervision?

Answer: *The opposite is more often the case, typically because the employee working at home or at an alternative worksite has fewer interruptions and distractions. Another reason the work usually doesn't suffer is because the teleworker has a great incentive to demonstrate the value of working at home or an alternative worksite.*

How Can the Supervisor Monitor Work Performance When the Employee is Not Physically Present?

Answer: *Managers should measure a teleworker's performance by examining the work products and results of his/her efforts throughout the rating period. It is also helpful to use project schedules, key milestones, regular status reports, and team reviews.*

What is the Impact on the Main Office When Some Employees are Working at an Alternative Worksite?

Answer: *Telework programs that are implemented with appropriate policies, practices, and guidelines do not impact the main office in any adverse manner. Agency guidelines must be established to minimize adverse impact on other staff members before employees begin to work at alternative sites. The overall interests of the office must take precedence over working at alternative sites. A supervisor may require an employee to work at the main worksite on a day previously scheduled for an alternative worksite, if the needs of the office so require. Teleworking should not create an added burden on the staff remaining in the office. An equitable distribution of workload should be maintained, and methods should be instituted to ensure that main office employees are not required to carry out the teleworker's responsibilities.*

What Equipment Will the Employee Need at the Home Based Worksite and Who Will Provide it?

Answer: *Provision of the needed equipment and who will provide it will vary by situation. Generally speaking, organizations are not required to provide equipment at home-based worksites. Although many of them will provide the necessary equipment, each agency must establish its own policies on this matter. See FMR Bulletin 2006-B3 for more information on what an agency can provide* (**www.gsa.gov/fmrbulletin**).

Do all Teleworkers Work With High-Tech Equipment?

Answer: *No. While technology can be very helpful to most teleworkers, a simple telephone may suffice for some.*

Who is Responsible for Maintaining and Servicing Government or Privately Owned Equipment Used at the Alternative Worksite?

Answer: *Generally, each Federal agency will be responsible for the service and maintenance of all Government-owned equipment. Teleworkers using their privately owned equipment are responsible for service and maintenance. See FMR Bulletin 2007-B1 for more information technology and telecommunications guidelines for alternative workplace arrangement programs (***www.gsa.gov/fmrbulletin***).*

Are Business Telephone Calls Made From the Home Reimbursable?

Answer: *Yes, a Federal employee may be reimbursed for business-related long-distance telephone calls made on the employee's personal telephone. Agencies may also provide employees with Government telephone credit cards.*

Who is Liable for Work Related Injuries and/or Damages at the Alternative Worksite?

Answer: *The Federal Government is liable. Government employees who sustain work-related injuries and/or property damage at an alternative worksite are covered under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act, the Federal Tort Claims Act, and/or the Federal Employees Compensation Act (workers' compensation).*

Want to stay up-to-date on new developments in telework? Visit www.telework.gov.

Revised March 2010