

U.S. Office of Personnel Management Fact Sheet



Telework and Emergency Preparedness

- Telework is a voluntary work arrangement in which an employee regularly performs officially assigned duties at home or another worksite geographically convenient to his or her residence.
- All Federal agencies must have a telework policy as required by Public Law 106-346, § 359, and must implement telework to the maximum extent possible for eligible employees.
- Telework should be integrated into planning for Continuity of Operations (COOP), including a pandemic health crisis.
- Agencies must designate a telework coordinator to be responsible for overseeing the implementation and operation of telework programs.
- Agencies may, at their discretion, define and use the types of telework that best fit their business needs.
- The choice of how to equip teleworkers is left to agency discretion. Security concerns should be considered in making equipment choices; agencies may wish to avoid use of employees' personal computers and provide agency PCs or laptops as appropriate. In all cases, however, agencies should follow the provisions contained in the Office of Management and Budget's June 23, 2006, memorandum, "Protection of Sensitive Agency Information."
- Telework can be used as a reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with medical conditions or other disabilities. At the discretion of an agency, telework can also help with employees who, because of physical injury, are temporarily unable to travel to the workplace. Telework provides an opportunity for agencies to hire qualified individuals (especially those who are mobility-impaired) who might otherwise not consider applying for positions.
- All teleworkers and telework managers should receive telework and information security training. Telework training is available via the joint OPM/GSA Website <http://www.telework.gov/courses> or may be provided by the agency. Information security training must be provided to all employees by their agencies.
- All teleworkers should have signed agreements, even for emergency telework arrangements, to provide structure and accountability. Key components of a telework agreement include the following: schedule; communication expectations with the employee's manager, workgroup, and customers; equipment; tasks; information security obligations; expectations for COOP, pandemic, or other emergency situations, including weather closures. Telework agreements should conform to any applicable negotiated agreements.
- Managers may deny a telework request or terminate a telework agreement for business reasons. The denial or termination must be documented in writing and shared with the employee.

- Teleworkers who work from home must provide an appropriate workspace and should certify that it is free from hazards. Government employees causing or suffering work-related injuries and/or damages at the alternative worksite (home, telework center, or other location) are covered by the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act, the Federal Tort Claims Act, or the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (workers' compensation), as appropriate.
- Employees who use computers and other information technology while teleworking need effective support during work hours; remote access presents some unique issues, and agencies should ensure tech support can meet these needs. These needs must also be taken into account in planning for using a distributed workforce during an emergency situation.
- Employees designated to work from home during an emergency event should telework frequently enough to ensure all systems are working smoothly.