



Supervisor Guidance for Managing Remote Workers during Emergency Conditions

UW-Green Bay recognizes the value and benefit of telecommuting in appropriate work environments. During emergency conditions, a short-term telecommuting policy may be in place, necessitating the more frequent supervision of remote workers. This information sheet provides guidance to supervisors in managing employees working under an approved temporary telecommuting arrangement.

DETERMINING FEASIBILITY FOR TELECOMMUTING ARRANGEMENTS

While the frequency of telecommuting arrangements will be heightened during emergency conditions, supervisors should still assess duties for employees requesting a temporary telecommuting arrangement to determine if the arrangement is feasible.

- 1) Only employees whose essential job duties can be fulfilled from a remote location are eligible for a short-term telecommuting agreement.
- 2) Telecommuting is only available if the institution has the ability to monitor or measure the work product produced by the employee during the period of telecommuting.
- 3) Telecommuting is only available to employees who have all tools required for their job available to them at the remote location. This may include, but is not limited to: a computer with all necessary software, a reliable internet connection, a telephone at which the employee can receive calls, a workspace free from distraction or hazards, an employer-issued radio or cell phone, a smoke detector, a surge protector, a desk, task lighting, a chair, and any other routinely needed tools or equipment. The UW System will not provide or reimburse an employee for required equipment needed for a short-term telecommuting agreement. All equipment, space, utilities and other services for the remote workspace must be provided by the employee at their own expense as a condition of the short-term telecommuting agreement.
- 4) Prior to beginning a short-term telecommuting arrangement, the employee must certify to the employer that their remote workspace meets minimum safety requirements.

Connected with the above guidance, the supervisor must determine the ability of the employee to perform their work from home, whether they employee has duties which must performed in the office setting, and whether



the performance of these duties from a remote setting will interfere with effectiveness and efficiency. Each request should be assessed based on the needs of the area understanding that the amount of student face to face interaction will be diminished as students have been asked to remain away from campus. Reception or front desk duties will remain necessary as long as the campus remains open for business. Forwarding phones should not in and of itself be considered front desk coverage if the office still will remain open for walk in traffic.

Special consideration should be made to determine whether the employee has duties which include financial transactions or confidential materials. While remote desk top does meet required technology security measures, the home setting is not the office setting and we cannot guarantee who has access to the work space. Employees who deal with PCI controlled transactions, confidential financial materials or employee records, or FERPA protected information should have special consideration paid to whether or not they can safely perform these duties without the additional security of the office setting.

If a supervisor feels that a position could not feasibly be performed remotely, a justification of the reason for infeasibility should be communicated to the requesting employee. If the denial determination is related to job duties, the supervisor should be prepared to indicate which job responsibilities (as documented in the employee's position description) cannot be fulfilled from a remote location.

EMPLOYEE AND SUPERVISOR EXPECTATIONS

A telecommuting employee is responsible for maintaining availability, levels of production at the expected standard, and quality of work at the expected standard while telecommuting. Inadequate availability or reduced work production and/or work quality may be cause for modifications or termination of an employee's participation in telecommuting.

The employee and supervisor must both understand that effective communication is essential for the telecommuting work arrangement to be successful. The employee must be available by phone and/or email during scheduled telecommuting work hours. Teleconferencing is a reliable means of communication and may substitute for actual attendance at some meetings. During emergency conditions, meetings should be offered with a virtual option for attendance.

A supervisor should also note what amount of the employee's work is can be performed remotely and what amount would need to be performed within the office setting. A supervisor can require that an employee who has been granted a telecommuting agreement can be required to return to campus to perform functions that can only be performed on campus, for meetings and trainings, and to perform transactions that require specific



equipment or resources. When planning for the short term telecommuting agreement the supervisor and employee should discuss expectations for attendance to facilitate these functions.

TIPS FOR MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS (summarized from the [United States Office of Personnel Management](#)):

- 1) **Plan the work** – Clearly define the work being accomplished by the employee from the home location. The work performed should align with organizational goals and the employee’s position description.
- 2) **Set expectations** – Ensure that both you and the employee understand what work they will be performing from home, anticipated hours of work, expectations for communication and accountability, and acceptable performance standards.
- 3) **Communicate clearly and often** – Ensure that lines of communication are open between you and the employee throughout the temporary telecommunicating period. Check in with the employee at least daily, more often for positions which require close or general supervision. Before commencing the telecommuting arrangement, employees and supervisors should discuss expectations for keeping the supervisor apprised of work progress.
- 4) **Monitor performance** – Continue to measure performance and provide feedback in the manner in which you would in the on-campus setting. In a telecommuting arrangement, supervisors will likely measure employee results rather than assessing day-to-day activities. Setting expectations with employees related to performance targets and measures ahead of time will help with monitoring performance.
- 5) **Recognize positive performance** – Ensure that the telecommuting employee continues to feel connected to the office by ensuring that they are able to participate virtually in meetings. Supervisors should continue to recognize good performance and publicly notice achievements.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FLSA NON-EXEMPT (HOURLY) WORKERS

FLSA non-exempt employees who are approved for telecommuting arrangements must continue to report hours worked. It is expected that employees will not work outside of the standard business hours for their position without prior approval from their supervisor. All hours must be reported in the HRS system, exactly as they are worked, in fifteen minute intervals. For example, if an employee works from 7:00 – 3:30 with a half hour lunch break, they are required to report those exact hours in the HRS system, rather than the pre-populated hours.



The working of [overtime](#), accrual of compensatory time, accrual and charging of leave time will be subject to the same rules and regulations as are in place at the designated university work location. In addition, non-exempt employees continue to be eligible for [nighttime and weekend differentials](#). For time not worked during an employee's regularly-scheduled work day, paid or unpaid leave must be used and reported in 15-minute increments.

It is suggested that supervisors take the following steps to successfully oversee non-exempt employees working under a telecommuting arrangement (Smith, 2015):

- 1) Keep track of when the employee is working remotely and what duties are being performed to ensure accurate time-keeping. While the intent is not to micromanage employees, verification of time reporting is critically essential for FLSA compliance.
- 2) Address overtime expectations explicitly, preferably in written form, instructing that the employee must obtain approval for any overtime hours (prior to working those hours).
- 3) Ensure that both you and the employee understand what constitutes hours worked. For more information about hours worked, please see the [DOL Fact Sheet #22: Hours Worked Under the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#).

The Office of Human Resources and Workforce Diversity is available to support supervisors who are overseeing remote workers. If you have any questions about the telecommuting process or supervision of remote workers, please contact Human Resources at hr@uwgb.edu or (920) 465-2390.

Resources:

OPM.gov. Managing teleworkers requires topnotch performance management skills. Retrieved from:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/performance-management/performance-management-cycle/planning/managing-teleworkers-requires-topnotch-performance-management-skills/>

Smith, A. (2015). 4 tips for allowing nonexempt employees to telecommute. SHRM. Retrieved from:

<https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/Pages/tips-nonexempt-employees-telecommute.aspx>