



Department of Justice

STATEMENT

OF

LEE J. LOFTHUS
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR ADMINISTRATION

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

"TELEWORK: BREAKING NEW GROUND"

PRESENTED ON

NOVEMBER 6, 2007

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Thank you Chairman Davis and members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia.

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the status of telework at the Department of Justice. I would like to begin by telling you that we at the Department of Justice (DOJ) are pleased that the Department was one of the first agencies to initiate a telework pilot program through its participation in the 1990 Federal Flexible Workplace Pilot (Flexi-place) Program. The program, developed by the Office of Personnel Management and General Services Administration, was established in response to a recommendation by the President’s Council on Management Improvement and was implemented with the support from the White House, Congress, and the major unions representing Federal employees. It was designed to test alternatives to the traditional work environment.

DOJ components continue to look for opportunities to expand the use of telework where it supports the Department’s mission. DOJ has many positions that are technically eligible for teleworking. However an inherent challenge to DOJ’s ability to expand telework participation is the nature of what we do, *enforce the law*. We have always recognized the practical reality that certain positions – correctional officers in a prison, deputy marshals in the courtroom, and evidence technicians, for example – perform duties at specific locations. We believe this is a primary reason that the Department’s overall telework participation rate, based on the total number of employees eligible to telework, is four percent. However, eight of our non-law enforcement components have participation rates over six percent; and our law enforcement components continue to look for ways to utilize telework flexibilities.

The components with the top four highest participation rates are the Office of Community Orienting Policing Services at 30 percent; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives at 21 percent; the Office of Justice Programs at 13 percent, and our Civil Division at 12 percent.

As the head of the Justice Management Division, I can report that we have 98 of our employees or 10 percent of the total JMD workforce teleworking. Within JMD, we are working to expand telework participation through a new Flexible Work Schedule Program. JMD

managers and employees will receive training on our new Program to learn how to utilize available work schedule flexibilities in support of maintaining focus on “mission first”.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has 504 employees, or 21 percent of its workforce, teleworking. ATF’s success with telework is in part attributed to a comprehensive communication plan that educates employees and managers on how and when telework can be used to meet the ATF mission and to support ATF employee efforts to balance work and family responsibilities. ATF also regularly surveys its managers to determine the effectiveness of employees serving on telework schedules and to obtain ideas on how to further enhance the program.

Enhancing the telework program through surveys and communication plans can be an effective tool to increase telework participation. JMD helps to facilitate Department-wide awareness about telework through a comprehensive Worklife Program website. Within this site, DOJ components and their employees can learn about telework schedules and flexibilities and how to apply.

Further, telework has become an important part of three of the Department’s major initiatives: Human Capital, as it relates to recruiting and retaining a diverse and talented workforce for the 21st century, Continuity of Operations (COOP), and our Pandemic Planning efforts. I would like to take this opportunity to address the important role our telework program plays in each of these three initiatives.

Human Capital Initiative

The Department of Justice’s Human Capital Strategic Plan seeks to effectively support the Department’s mission representing the rights and interests of the American people. An important vehicle to help us strengthen our Nation’s law enforcement efforts is employee performance, creativity, and dedication; and, as technology improves, our jobs can be redefined to support employees and to maximize their performance by making available practical and workable solutions to manage the demands of work and personal lives.

One of the goals of DOJ’s Human Capital Strategic Plan is to pursue innovation by effectively using available flexibilities and tools, develop innovative programs, and proactively seek additional authorities to improve performance. The Department continues to encourage and educate managers on the use of telework as a strategic tool in enhancing morale and productivity, and calculating measurable results. During the 3rd Quarter FY 2007, DOJ informed all DOJ telework coordinators of the opportunity for employees to enroll, at no cost, in one of the General Services Administration’s sponsored telework centers through September 30, 2007.

DOJ continues to make notable progress in phasing in the upgraded payroll system that includes codes for tracking telework, and is expanding telework opportunities at the sub-agency level. With most DOJ components, using the new National Finance Center (NFC) “Star Web System,” the Department has the ability to quickly and accurately derive “real time” information on telework participation in response to OPM and Congressional requests.

Continuity of Operations (COOP)

Telework is a critical component of the Department of Justice’s emergency COOP activities. Because of this, DOJ participates in COOP exercises to test our state of readiness and the ability of our employees to conduct mission critical functions and activities in the event of an emergency. These exercises were carried out smoothly, and we did not uncover any serious deficiencies in our abilities to work from remote locations. We are continuing to evaluate and monitor our performance and abilities in this area to ensure our employees have what they need to safely conduct mission-critical functions in a secure and timely manner.

Our components are integrating telework into their emergency preparedness/COOP plans. The number of employees equipped, trained and ready to telework in the case of a long term crisis, e.g., pandemic influenza, is 4,236.

DOJ has conducted educational sessions for all DOJ telework coordinators that included information on regional telework initiatives, automated telework tracking and integration of telework into continuity of operations plans. We have briefed agency COOP officials on the strategic importance of telework in responding to a pandemic crisis. Several DOJ components have issued new revised telework policies and conducted management training to encourage broader use of telework.

Pandemic Plan

The Department of Justice is committed to maintaining a working agency should an influenza pandemic occur in the United States. Plans and strategies have been developed to ensure continuous operation of the Department and our authorities. One critical element of our Pandemic Plan is our telework policy. Employees have agreements in place that allow them to work either from home or from another location convenient to their home a few times per week or per month, as appropriate. In the event of a pandemic, we will enhance our telework program to allow employees to telework for “social distancing” purposes. Employees will also be able to telework during periods when an alternative care provider is available to care for a sick family member. We are encouraging all components within the Department of Justice to discuss with their employees how to handle a pandemic scenario. The Department is also practicing teleworking in preparation for a pandemic, and discussing with employees currently not teleworking the possibility of emergency telework should it be needed. We plan to continue conducting telework and IT security training for first time teleworkers. The Department has and will continue to conduct testing exercises which include telework, to ensure all systems are in place if the pandemic should occur.

Enhancing Telework

The Department continues to assess its use of telework to help achieve the DOJ mission and to assist employees balance professional and personal responsibilities. We recognize that in any effort to expand our telework participation, it is important that we remain cognizant of the challenge of doing so in a law enforcement agency. A variety of issues including, information technology security, IT funding, organizational culture and the disposition of classified information, office coverage, and the nature of our work as a law enforcement agency pose challenges to the full use of telework as a workforce flexibility.

As we move forward to strengthen our telework program, we will continue to educate our employees and managers, work to increase the budget for technology that support teleworking, and establish further pilot telework programs.

Mr. Chairman, once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.