



ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS teleWORK

What Are The Latest Figures On The Numbers Of Federal Teleworkers?

Answer: According to “The Status of Telework in the Federal Government 2004” – OPM report to Congress listed 102,921 Federal teleworkers, which is about 5.6% of the workforce.

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/disapproval 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?

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: The answer to the first question is “no”: Subject to any applicable union agreement, management decides whether an employee can work off-site, depending on the nature of the position and the characteristics of the employee. Also, management has the right to end an employee’s use of the teleworking option if, for example, the employee’s performance declines or if the arrangement no longer meets the organization’s needs.

The answer to the second question is “generally no”, unless telework is a condition of employment or it is required to continue government operations in times of emergency. In these instances, an employee may be required to work at home, a telecenter, or an alternative workplace.

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: *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.*

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 many.*

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.*

Are Business Phone Calls Made From The Home Reimbursable:

Answer: *Yes, a Federal employee may be reimbursed for business-related long distance phone calls made on the employee's personal phone. GSA regulations (41 CFR 101.7) provide for reimbursement of telephone calls approved by the supervisor. The employee should submit a standard form 1164 through appropriate channels to receive the reimbursement. 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. 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).*