



Office of Civilian Human Resources CG-121

Telework Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is telework?

- Telework is an alternative work arrangement for employees to conduct all or some of their work away from the primary workplace. This concept can be applied to a variety of work experiences. Work locations might include residences, telework centers, or other acceptable locations. Telework schedules may be fixed (regular, recurring) or on an occasional (situational, ad hoc) basis. Telework is a privilege, not an entitlement and may be withdrawn for legitimate reason.

What isn't telework?

- Working from home and never communicating with managers or coworkers
- A substitute for child or elder care
- Usually a full-time arrangement

Employees

What can I do if my manager won't let me telework?

- COMDTINST 12630.1 establishes the basic guidelines for telework eligibility and the application process. Within this framework, managers and supervisors generally have discretion to implement telework to fit the business needs of their organizations. Bargaining Unit employees are subject to provisions of any applicable negotiated agreement.

How do I request to telework?

- In general, employees should be prepared to make a business-based proposal for a request to telework, rather than base the request to telework on personal considerations. At the very least, in addition to describing logistics like location and frequency, you should be able to discuss how you will accomplish your work without adverse effect on your organization and/or co-workers.
- COMDTINST 12630.1 requires that a written telework agreement between the supervisor and employee be in place before s/he can begin to telework. This agreement outlines the specifics of the telework arrangement (e.g., location of telework, expectations). Also, employees will be required to successfully complete an interactive telework training program before they will be allowed to telework.

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Am I eligible to telework?

- Eligibility criteria are outlined by the COMDTINST and collective bargaining agreements. The [Telework Enhancement Act of 2010](#) (Act) requires each agency to determine eligibility for its employees. [General notice](#) of eligibility was provided to all DHS employees on June 6, 2011. If you are unsure or require additional information, you can review the COMDTINST or contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist.
- An employee may be eligible to telework if job duties are partly or wholly portable, meaning that work can be conducted offsite without workflow or security concerns. In addition, employee performance will be considered, along with other factors deemed appropriate to ensure that telework does not diminish employee performance or agency operations. Also, the Act specifies certain limitations related to eligibility and participation that must be taken into account when making these determinations.

Is there telework training available for employees?

- There are two interactive telework training modules available on the Coast Guard Portal Learning Management System (<https://elearning.uscg.mil/catalog/>): **“Telework 101 for Managers”** and **“Telework 101 for Employees”**. Additional training resources are available on the CG LMS SkillPort Portal, search “telework”.

Who is responsible for approving an employee's request to telework?

- The immediate supervisor must formally agree to a specific employee's request. Prior to beginning telework, the employee and manager must successfully complete an interactive telework training program and enter into a written agreement.

If Federal offices are closed due to inclement weather or some other emergency, are teleworkers excused from work as well?

- Not necessarily. For example, in the Washington, DC, area, and as detailed in OPM’s [Washington, DC, Area, Dismissal and Closure Procedures](#), teleworkers may still be required to work, depending on the circumstances. Telework arrangements are typically voluntary. However, once an employee enters into a telework agreement, it is possible that an agency may require an employee to telework if this is clearly stated and agreed to in the written telework agreement. To avoid ambiguity, the telework agreement should specify what is expected of employees under these circumstances.

Can a manager deny a request to telework?

- Yes, managers can deny a request to telework, based on business reasons and subject to limitations on telework participation described in the Commandant Instruction. For example, an employee’s performance may not meet the standards outlined in the agency’s telework policy or the terms of the written telework agreement between that employee and his/her supervisor. Similarly, a position may not be eligible because its official duties and responsibilities have been determined to be incompatible with telework. The denial should be made in writing, with an explanation, and this written denial should be provided to the employee in a timely manner. Collective bargaining agreements may provide for an employee to file a grievance about the denial or cancellation of a telework agreement through the negotiated grievance procedure. Check with your servicing employee relations staff to discuss grievance procedures.

Can telework help an employee with child or other dependent care needs?

- Telework is not a substitute for dependent care. However, telework can be valuable to individuals with caregiving responsibilities. Time saved commuting can be spent with family members, and the flexibility of being closer to home may enable caregivers to take less time off for activities like doctor's visits, school programs, etc. A teen-aged child or elderly relative might also be at home with the teleworker, after school or during the day, as long as they are independently pursuing their own activities.

Can Federal contractors telework?

- Since the Federal telework program and policies cover only Federal employees, Federal contractors are not governed by OPM and GSA telework guidance or by individual agency policies, and are not counted in the annual Status of Telework in the Federal Government report to Congress.
- However, this does not prohibit – and should not prevent – contract employees from actually teleworking, as appropriate.
- Telework arrangements for contractors should be negotiated with both the contractor's own employer and with the appropriate Federal agency official, so policies and procedures are in close alignment and all concerned parties are in agreement. Telework language may even be integrated into the contract itself.

If my job is in one state, can I telework from a different state? What happens to my duty station if I do this?

- There are no Governmentwide restrictions on distance for teleworkers.
- Teleworking from this distance may have an effect on duty station, if you are not physically present at your duty station at least two days in each biweekly pay period. For more information, see OPM's [Official Worksite for Location-Based Pay Purposes](#).
- Reassignment of official worksite affects pay. The employee whose official worksite is reassigned receives locality pay for the telework worksite, not the original worksite. Locality pay tables are available on the OPM [Pay Information](#) site.
- Reassignment of official worksite may have implications for a [Reduction in Force](#) (RIF), as the new location may be a different competitive area than the original worksite.

Does my agency reimburse me for any travel back to my office?

- 5 U.S.C. § 5702 has been interpreted to then say that in circumstances where the official worksite is reassigned to the telework location, trips to the main worksite are "official business" and the employee is entitled to travel reimbursement.

Where do I submit my telework application?

- Requests to telework and signed telework agreements should be maintained by the employee and supervisor.

Do I need a telework agreement before I can telework?

- Yes. COMDTINST 12630.1 mandates that a written telework agreement between the supervisor and employee be in place prior to the start of telework. This is true of all teleworkers, i.e., those who will telework on a regular and recurring basis, and those who will telework on an occasional or ad-hoc basis (also referred to as situational or episodic telework).

Supervisors

How do I know an employee is working when I can't see them?

- Effective performance management is the same whether or not an employee teleworks. Supervisors should measure employee performance by results, not physical presence. Supervisor's expectations for performance should be clearly addressed in an employee's performance plan, regardless of whether or not the employee is a teleworker. When an employee participates in telework, expectations related to accountability do not differ by virtue of the telework arrangement. Questions regarding performance management should be directed to your servicing Human Resources Specialist..

Do I have to manage a teleworker differently than my in-office staff?

- Supervisors should not manage the performance of teleworkers any differently than non-teleworking employees. However, telework may require some changes in communication techniques, and supervisors will need to be mindful of the ways they assign and reward work to ensure they are equitable for onsite and teleworking employees. The Act requires that teleworkers and non-teleworkers be treated the same for purposes of performance appraisal; training, rewarding, reassigning, promoting, reducing in grade, retaining, and removing employees; work requirements; or other acts involving managerial discretion.

Can teleworkers follow an alternative work schedule?

- Yes. There is no Governmentwide restriction on teleworkers following alternative work schedules.

Can a teleworker's schedule be different on their telework days?

- Subject to the operational needs of the organization, there is no restriction on how much flexibility may be allowed to teleworkers in this regard. Since telework eliminates commute time, it may make sense for the teleworker to begin their work day earlier than they would otherwise. However, the amount of flexibility will be determined by policy, collective bargaining agreements, and the business needs of the organization.

Can supervisors telework?

- Yes. In fact, best practices in telework support this. Supervisors are encouraged to promote a positive telework culture in their agencies by modeling participation in the telework program. As with any position, whether or not telework is feasible – and what kind of telework (how frequent, how regular, etc.) is most appropriate – is dependent on the business needs of the organization. See the COMDTISNT for details and any restrictions.

Is there telework training available for supervisors?

- There are two telework training modules available on the Coast Guard Portal [Learning Management System](#): “Telework 101 for Managers” and “Telework 101 for Employees”. These courses meet the interactive training requirements of the Act. Additional training resources are available on the CG LMS SkillPort Portal, search “telework”. Also OPM’s [Management Development Centers](#) offer telework training courses.

If the supervisor denies an employee's telework request, can the employee appeal that decision?

- Your servicing human resources specialist can provide guidance about appealing a supervisors decision

Does an employee have a right to telework?

- No. Subject to policy, procedures, and any applicable collective bargaining agreements, management decides whether or not an employee may be permitted to telework. A decision will depend on several factors such as whether or not the duties of the position are suitable for telework, or limitations based on certain types of disciplinary action as defined in the Act.
- In addition, management has the right to review and end an employee's telework arrangement if it is no longer viable for business-based reasons, for example, if the employee's performance declines or fails to comply with the terms of the written agreement between the supervisor and the teleworking employee.

Telework Coordinator

Is the agency required to check the safety and security of a home-based telework office?

- No, the agency is not required to visit the teleworker’s home to inspect it for safety and ergonomics, although policy may establish that a supervisor or other official has the right to do so. For purposes of guidance, policies may include a self-certification safety/security checklist that managers may ask teleworkers to complete as a proxy for an onsite visit.

Can an agency force an employee to work at home?

- No. Telework arrangements are typically voluntary. However, once an employee enters into a telework arrangement, it is possible that an agency may require an employee to telework if this is clearly stated and agreed to in the written telework agreement. To avoid ambiguity, the telework agreement should specify what is expected of employees under these circumstances.

Who is liable for work-related injuries and/or damages at the alternative worksite?

- Employees who suffer work-related injuries and/or damages at the alternative worksite are covered under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act, the Federal Tort Claims Act, or the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (Workers' Compensation).

Are business phone calls from the home reimbursable?

- Yes, a Federal employee may receive reimbursement for business-related long distance phone calls made on their 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.

What role do unions play?

- Agencies should allow pre-decisional involvement to the fullest extent practicable as provided in Executive Order 13522 and satisfy collective bargaining obligations by working with labor when developing their telework policies and agreements.

Information Technology

What Information Technology (IT) hardware and software will the employee need at the home-based worksite?

- All requirements, including hardware and software, for Common Access Card Remote Access Service (CACRAS) and Outlook Web Access (OWA) are listed on the TISCOM CGPortal Page under Customer Service, then Remote Access Information.

<https://cgportal.uscg.mil/CTL/129NVAH>

- In general for CACRAS:
 - Computer running Windows Operating System XP or newer
 - Internet access (wired or Wi-Fi)
 - Common Access Card (CAC) reader
 - CISCO Virtual Private Network (VPN) software
 - ActiveIdentity ActiveClient software
 - CAC reader drivers
 - DOD root certificate installer software
- In general for OWA:
 - Windows or MAC computer
 - Internet access (wired or Wi-Fi)
 - CAC reader
 - ActiveIdentity ActiveClient software
 - CAC reader drivers
 - DOD root certificate installer software

Where can employees obtain the required software listed above?

- From the TISCOM CGPortal Page under Customer Service, then Remote Access Information.

<https://cgportal.uscg.mil/CTL/129NVAH>

Who does the employee contact if they experience IT problems while Teleworking?

- For problems with your VPN Client please contact the OSC Help Desk at 1-800-821-7081
- For issues with Outlook Web Access (OWA) please contact TISCOM 1-800-847-2479 (opt 3.).
- For problems with your Remote Desktop, Standard Workstation, Coast Guard issued laptops, CAC Reader/Software/Cards- please contact the Centralized Service Desk at: 1-855-CGFixIT

Can I use my home internet connection for Telework?

- Yes. If you are using a Wi-Fi signal for your Internet connection, the Wi-Fi router must be configured to use Wi-Fi Protected Access 2 (WPA2) security protocol.

Can I use a wireless keyboard and wireless mouse?

- A wireless mouse is approved. Wireless keyboards shall not be used for Telework functions because the signal can be intercepted and the information you type can be stolen.

Do I need anti-virus software on my computer?

- Yes. Antivirus software is required. Employees can take advantage of the McAfee Home Use Program.
 - Via DHS Home Use Program: <http://www.mcafee.com/epppb/dhs>
 - Via DISA Home Use Program: https://patches.csd.disa.mil/CollectionInfo.aspx?id=496&bc=213_1_15_asc

Who is responsible for maintaining and servicing equipment used at the alternate work site?

- If the computer is a Coast Guard Standard Workstation, then all service requests are submitted through the CGFIXIT program.
- If the computer is a Non-standard Workstation, then the employee's unit is responsible.
- Personal computers and equipment is supported by the employee and the Government has no obligation to provide funding necessary to support privately owned equipment.

How do employees obtain a CACRAS account?

- Employees need unit approval to obtain CACRAS accounts. Accounts are requested through CGFIXIT. There are several steps necessary to obtain an account, to include reading policy and completing a memorandum. CACRAS accounts required the employee's unit to provide charge back funding on an annual basis to fund the CACRAS service.

Questions regarding Coast Guard Telework may be submitted via email to: cgtelework@uscg.mil.