

Telecommuting During Emergency Situations: Frequency Asked Questions



Note: *These questions and answers apply during an emergency situation, as declared by University officials, such as a pandemic. Employees who wish to telecommute during non-emergency situations must complete the Alternative Work Schedule Agreement.*

At what point is telecommuting an appropriate work arrangement?

If the University officially declares an emergency situation, telecommuting may be a good solution to ensure that essential work continues. Managers may use discretion in determining which employees are eligible to telecommute, as well as assigning work hours and coverage of responsibilities. The following are examples of when it would be appropriate to telecommute (other situations may apply, as well):

- Your child's school is closed due to an emergency.
- You have been exposed to illness due to family members who are ill (if you are ill yourself, you should use your sick time, rather than working while you are ill).
- The University or your manager determines it would be best for some employees to work from home to encourage social distancing.

Are all work roles suitable for telecommuting?

No, not all roles are suitable for this type of work arrangement due to job duties (e.g., customer service roles in an area open from 8:30-5:00). But given a particular emergency need, responsibilities may be temporarily reassigned to maximize the department's ability to continue providing its services.

During what hours should the telecommuting employee be available to work?

Typically all employees should be available to work during regular business hours. Managers may use discretion in assigning work hours and coverage of responsibilities.

How does our office know who is telecommuting?

Managers should determine the best way for their office to notify staff of working arrangements. The manager may wish to do the following:

- Send a daily e-mail to the office to let everyone know who is telecommuting that day.
- Post a list on the department's intranet site.
- Post a list on an office bulletin board.
- Post signs on the office doors or workstations where employees are telecommuting.

How does the telecommuting employee communicate with office staff and customers?

The telecommuting employee should be available by phone and/or e-mail during regular working hours. If the employee will be away from the phone or computer for a period of time, he/she should set up out of office messages on his/her phone and e-mail.

When does the telecommuting arrangement end?

The telecommuting arrangement may end at whatever point the University or manager deems it safe for the telecommuting employee to return to work. The employee should prepare to return to work the day following the notice that ends the telecommuting arrangement.

*In order to prepare in advance for emergencies, see the **Advanced Workplace Preparation for Emergency Situations** document.*