

## **DRAFT TELEWORK POLICY TEMPLATE**

\_\_\_\_\_ considers telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual, job and supervisor characteristics are best suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting allows an employee to work at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for all or part of their regular workweek. Telecommuting is a voluntary work alternative that may be appropriate for some employees and some jobs. It is not an entitlement; it is not a company-wide benefit; and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure:

1. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.
2. Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or formal, as will be described below. Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave, to the extent practical for the employee and the organization, and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate. All informal telecommuting arrangements are made on a case by case basis, focusing on the business needs of the organization first. Such informal arrangements are not the focus of this policy.
3. Individuals requesting formal telecommuting arrangements must have been employed with \_\_\_\_\_, for a minimum of 90 days of continuous, regular employment and must have exhibited above average performance, in accordance with the company's performance appraisal process.
4. Any telecommuting arrangement made will be on a trial basis for the first 3 months, and may be discontinued, at will, at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or the organization.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines, facsimile equipment or software, photocopiers, etc.) for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. The human resource and information system departments will serve as resources in this matter. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the employee. \_\_\_\_\_ accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. \_\_\_\_\_, reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the

organization is to be used for business purposes only. The telecommuter should sign an inventory of all office property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment all company property will be returned to the company, unless other arrangements have been made.

6. Consistent with the organization's expectations of information asset security for employees working at the office full-time, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home office. Steps include, but are not limited to, use of locked file cabinets, disk boxes and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment.

7. The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within their home for work purposes. \_\_\_\_\_ will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup of the employee's home office such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space. Employees will be offered appropriate assistance in setting up a work station designed for safe, comfortable work.

8. After equipment has been delivered, a designated representative of \_\_\_\_\_ will visit the employee's home work site to inspect for possible work hazards and suggest modifications. Repeat inspections will occur on an as-needed basis. Injuries sustained by the employee while at their home work location and in conjunction with their regular work duties are normally covered by the company's workers' compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries in accordance with company worker's compensation procedures. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to their work site. Teleworkers who work from home will not host business related visitors in their home. Visits by co-workers for business reasons must have prior Director/Supervisor level approval. This restriction is intended to protect the employee and limit liability exposure for the employee and the company.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) for successful completion of job responsibilities. The organization will also reimburse the employee for all other business-related expenses such as phone calls, shipping costs, etc. that are reasonably incurred in accordance with job responsibilities.

10. The employee and manager will agree on the number of days of telecommuting allowed each month (average of 8 days per month), the work schedule the employee will customarily maintain, and the manner and frequency of communication. The employee agrees to be accessible by phone or modem within a reasonable time period during the agreed upon work schedule.

Managers/Supervisors are responsible to ensure that a sufficient onsite presence is maintained by each telecommuter in their section, and by the section as a whole, to

ensure effective communication with supervisors and co-workers. Telecommuters are expected to be onsite for scheduled meetings and management all-hands meetings.

11. Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the organization. Telecommuting employees than office-based employees due to the nature of the work will be held to a higher standard of compliance. Hours worked in excess of those specified per day and per work week, in accordance with state and federal requirements will require the advance approval of the supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in the immediate cessation of the telecommuting agreement.

12. Before entering into any telecommuting agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of the human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement paying particular attention to the following areas:

a. Employee Suitability - the employee and manager will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.

b. Job Responsibilities - the employee and manager will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.

c. Equipment needs, work space design considerations and scheduling issues.

d. Tax and other legal implications for the business use of the employee's home, based on IRS, state and local government restrictions. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

13. If the employee and manager agree, and the human resource department concurs, a draft telecommuting agreement will be prepared and signed by all parties and a 3 month trial period will commence.

14. Evaluation of telecommuter performance during the trial period will include daily interaction by phone and e-mail between the employee and the manager, and weekly face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. At the conclusion of the trial period the employee and manager will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. Evaluation of telecommuter performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in both content and frequency but will focus on work output and completion of objectives rather than time-based performance.

15. An appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter and supervisor will be agreed to as part of the discussion process and will be more formal during the trial period. After conclusion of the trial period, the manager and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that seems appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.

16. Telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child or elder care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Prospective telecommuters are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering into a trial period.

17. Employees entering into a telecommuting agreement may be required to forfeit use of a personal office, workstation or parking space in favor of a shared arrangement to maximize organization office and parking space needs.

18. The availability of telecommuting as a flexible work arrangement for employees of \_\_\_\_\_ can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the employer. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days notice of such a change to accommodate commuting, child care and other problems that may arise from such a change. There may be instances, however, where no notice is possible.

### **Position Criteria**

Whether a position is suitable for the telework program depends on job content, rather than job title. A position may be suitable for the telework program, if:

- a. Work activities are portable and can be performed effectively outside the office.
- b. Job tasks are easily quantifiable or primarily project oriented.
- c. An employee's participation in the telework program will not adversely affect the performance of other employees.
- d. Contact with other employees and clients is predictable (i.e., no "walk-in" appointments).
- e. The technology needed to perform the job off-site is available.
- f. Privacy Act concerns, health and safety, etc., can be adequately assured.
- g. There are no contractual arrangements or client concerns that would preclude teleworking.

A position may not be suitable for the telework program, if:

- a. The employee needs to have daily face-to-face contact with the supervisor, other employees, clients, or the public.
- b. The employee needs daily access to material that cannot be removed from the regular office.
- c. NSS is unable to provide any special facilities or equipment required to perform the job.
- d. It would be too costly to duplicate the same level of security at the alternative workplace.
- e. Client(s) objects to the arrangement.

### **Employee Criteria**

These characteristics will help determine an employee's suitability for participation in the telework program:

- a. The employee has exhibited self-starter characteristics, good organizational skills, and can function independently.
- b. The employee's performance is at least fully successful.
- c. The employee can satisfy home worksite requirements.

### **Supervisor Criteria**

In order to promote a successful telework program, supervisors are encouraged to:

- a. Try the new arrangement and work through problems or obstacles that may occur.
- b. Clearly define specific tasks and expectations.
- c. Communicate effectively with the employee and measure performance by results.



**Telework Agreement**

The Telework Agreement is written agreement between the employee and the supervisor requiring them to adhere to applicable guidelines and policies. The telework agreement is NOT an employment contract and may not be construed as such. Each employee and supervisor must sign the Telework Agreement. Signed agreements must then be submitted to the Telework Coordinator for tracking purposes.

**TELEWORK AGREEMENT**

This TELEWORK AGREEMENT is made by and between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter referred to as "Employee"). Outlined below are the conditions for teleworking agreed upon by the employee and \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee's Alternate Work Site**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee's Telework Schedule is:**

\_\_\_ **Fixed** (complete schedule below) or \_\_\_ **Flexible** (submit schedule, in advance, each week)

<b>Fixed Schedule</b>				
<b>Week Day</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Alt Worksite</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				

**Examples of duties to be performed when teleworking**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Employee Acknowledgement**

I understand teleworking is voluntary and that my supervisor or I may end this telework agreement at any time. I also understand that this agreement is not a contract for employment. Furthermore, by signing this telework agreement I acknowledge I have read and will abide by the NSS Telework Policy, including the Telework Guidelines, Home Office Safety Guidelines, and the Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist.

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Employee's Signature

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Date

**Supervisor's Review**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist and approve this request.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist and I am unable to approve this request at this time for the following reason(s):

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Supervisor's Signature

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Date

**Please Return a Copy of this Form to the Telework Coordinator.**

### **Safety Checklist** (suggestions)

- q Electrical outlets are grounded.
- q Cords and plugs have three wires/prongs.
- q Interconnecting cables are out of the way, tied together, or covered to minimize the danger of tripping over them and reduce amount of dust they hold.
- q Never allow cords to interfere with machine operation.
- q Ensure that plugs are locked or securely inserted into the outlets.
- q Use surge protector or master switch. Do not overload extension cords or outlets.
- q Periodically inspect all cords and plugs. Repair or replace them immediately when problems are identified.
- q Ensure that cords are behind desks and tables so there is no danger of tripping over them.
- q Ensure that cord does not interfere with machine operation.
- q Ensure that phone is easily accessible in designated office area.
- q Heavy items are on secure stands and are child-proofed.
- q Equipment is placed near the wall and away from walkways and doors to prevent from tripping or bumping into it.
- q Keep liquids away from the equipment.
- q Keep materials filed or on shelves and out of the way. Store heavier materials in bottom drawers of filing cabinets
- q Desks, tables, and filing cabinets are placed near the walls and away from walkways and doors.
- q Cabinet and desk drawers are closed when not in use.
- q When using your computer, ensure that the desk or table height is approximately 27 to 39 inches from the floor, allowing your forearms to be parallel to the floor and wrists straight. Leave space in front of your keyboard for the heels of your hands to rest while you are keying.
- q Ensure working surfaces are smooth and free of sharp and jagged edges.
- q Inspect desks and tables to ensure that joints and screws are tight.

**Smoke Detectors:** The employee's alternative work site should be equipped with the appropriate number of smoke detectors that are properly installed and tested periodically to ensure that they work.

**STORAGE:** The storing of any item on top of tall furniture or cabinets should be avoided. To permit this practice sets the stage for many types of injuries. Employees attempting to place things on top of furniture or cabinets can strain themselves, can fall if chairs are used in place of ladders or even if ladders are used incorrectly. The items themselves can fall, striking employees. It is best to limit storage to designated storage rooms/areas. Properly arranged, such rooms/areas will have secured shelves, adequate aisles, proper lighting, and will be maintained in a state of good housekeeping.

A good practice is to limit storage height to maintain a minimum of 18 inches clearance from the ceiling in general, and from light fixtures and other electrical equipment in particular. Check to see that heavy items are stored on lower shelves. Have a ladder or approved step stool available so you can safely reach high places within the work or storage area.

**OFFICE PRACTICES:** Certain office practices can be hazardous. File cabinets can cause accidents in many ways. If located near entrance doors or aisles, drawers left open can become a bump or trip hazard. If the upper drawers are fully utilized while the lower drawers are nearly empty, the cabinet can tip over when the upper drawers are pulled out. ***A good rule is to never open more than one file drawer at a time. Close it when leaving the file cabinet -- even for a brief period.***

**HEATERS:** Care should be exercised when using portable heaters. Be sure that the heating element is guarded against accidental contact, positioned not too closely to furniture or other combustibles, and that a tip-over switch cuts off electrical power to the heating element if the heater is knocked over. This feature could prevent the heater from starting a fire. Kerosene heaters should not be used in the work area.

**COFFEE POTS OR SIMILAR ITEMS:** Use of coffee pots and similar items should be placed out of normal work areas and on a noncombustible surface. If an electrical short-circuit occur, quick action is necessary to prevent a fire. Be sure that all of these types of electrical appliance are turned off at the end of the day, or when leaving the alternate work site.

**RADIATORS:** Some older homes use radiators for heat instead of the more modern forced air systems. If your work area has radiators, be sure not to place combustible or flammable articles on or near them. Also check to assure that electrical power cords are not allowed to drape across them.

**VIDEO DISPLAY TERMINALS:** Video Display Terminals (VDTs) are word processors or computer terminals which display information on a screen. Safe use of VDTs can prevent employee injury. Because of the expanding use of VDTs, concerns have been expressed about their potential health effects. Complaints include excessive fatigue, eyestrain and irritation, blurred vision, headaches, stress and neck, back, arm, and muscle pain. Other concerns include physical discomfort, and cumulative trauma disorders.

Visual symptoms can result from improper lighting, glare, distance from the screen, positioning of the screen, or copy material that is difficult to read. VDT operators can reduce eyestrain by temporarily looking away from the VDT, doing eye exercises, switching to other work or adjusting the brightness of the VDT screen.

VDT users are subject to the risk of developing various musculoskeletal and nerve disorders, such as cumulative, or repetitive motion disorders. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), a cumulative trauma disorder, is caused by repetitive wrist-hand movement and exertion. When irritated, the tendons and their sheaths housed inside the carpal tunnel swell and press against the nearby median nerve. The pressure causes tingling, numbness, or severe pain in the wrist and hand. CTS can be reduced by stopping or limiting VDT activity, by maintaining proper posture, or as a last resort, surgery.

**DESK:** The height of the work surface should be comfortable for most uses (computer work, writing, and reading). Conventional desk surfaces are usually 29 inches high, which is adequate for most tasks. The height recommended for a computer surface is 26 inches.

**SEATING:** The chair is probably the most important piece of furniture in your work area. Experience has shown that a good ergonomically designed swivel chair, properly adjusted to fit the teleworker's height and work surface, will help improve productivity and avoid backache, neck strain, and disabilities such as CTS. The seat should be adjustable, and the height (which is measured from the floor) of the top surface of the seat should be 15 to 21 inches. The height and angle of the backrest should be adjustable and it should provide support for the lower back. Armrests should be substantial enough to provide support, but not so large as to be in the way.

**LIGHTING:** The lighting in your work area can affect comfort, visibility, and performance. Whether you're using natural light or artificial lighting, it should be directed toward the side or behind your line of vision, not in front or above it. Bright light sources can bounce off working surfaces and diminish your sense of contrast.

**NOISE:** Depending on your preferences, noisy or totally noise-free environments can be distracting and stressful. Some background sound, such as music, can be beneficial for maintaining a level of productivity and reducing boredom.