



NOAA Satellites and Information

National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service



Telework Policy

Addendum to the NOAA Telework Policy, Dated November 28, 2003

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1. INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) recognizes the value of Telework as a tool for enhancing employee productivity and job satisfaction, improving customer contacts, attracting and retaining high-quality workers, reducing commuting time and expenses and improving access and accommodation for employees with disabilities. It is NESDIS' policy to support Telework as an ongoing management strategy to achieve its strategic goals and objectives.

2. BACKGROUND

Telework refers to paid employment performed away from the conventional office, either at home or at an alternative office site, for an agreed-upon portion of the workweek. Telework should not be confused with home-based businesses or independent contractor arrangements in the home. It also differs from situations where employees permanently work out of their home, traveling daily to clients or audit and inspection sites on premises not controlled by their employers. Telework is also known as telecommuting, flexiplace, and work-at-home.

The 2001 Department of Transportation Appropriations Act (Public Law 106-346), requires Federal agencies to establish policies allowing eligible employees to telework "to the maximum extent possible without diminishing employee performance." This policy implements the law within NESDIS.

3. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This telework policy incorporates any and all requirements stipulated in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Telework Policy, dated November 2003. NESDIS adopts in full NOAA's telework policy. Any previous NESDIS Headquarter, staff or line office flexiplace authority are hereby cancelled, except those necessary due to existing collective bargaining agreements.

4. SCOPE

The provisions of this document apply to all NESDIS employees EXCEPT:

- employees serving probationary or trial periods;
- student interns unless an exception has been authorized by DOC Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) based on operational need;
- members of the Senior Executive Service; and
- employees in Demo Pay Band V.

5. OFFICIAL DUTY STATION

The official duty station of an employee who teleworks remains unchanged for purposes of pay, leave, benefits, and other entitlements.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE

The NESDIS Telework Program is effective upon approval by NOAA Human Resource Management Office (HRMO) as shown on the cover.

7. PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office of the NESDIS Assistant Administrator (AA) is responsible for the development, administration, operation and evaluation of the NESDIS telework implementing procedures. Within that office, the Office of Management Operations and Analysis (MOAO) is delegated primary responsibility for these functions.

NESDIS' Telework Coordinator, who is a member of the MOAO staff, serves as the central point of contact between the telework contacts for the line and staff offices and NOAA's Telework Coordinator. As such, the NESDIS Telework Coordinator is responsible for receiving and distributing telework information to contacts, preparing NESDIS-wide reports as required by NOAA, keeping the NESDIS AA and Director of MOAO informed of any significant changes in the program, responding to the NOAA Telework Coordinator's request for statistical and program information, assuring telework implementing procedures and amendments thereto are approved by the Director, HRMO prior to implementation.

NESDIS Line and Staff Office Contacts Each NESDIS line and staff office must designate a Telework Contact and provide the individual's name to the NESDIS Telework Coordinator. The Telework Contact for each line and staff office is responsible for providing assistance to the employees within their offices.

The NESDIS Approving Official The approval official for the purposes of implementing telework is the NESDIS Deputy Assistant Administrator. The Approving Official is responsible for:

- Approving, disapproving, modifying, or terminating employees' telework application and/or agreements;
- Approving the function, or portion thereof, of a position suitable for telework; and
- Authorizing the expenditure of funds to cover expenses associated with approved telework arrangements, subject to NESDIS policy, funding availability and Government need.

The Deputy Assistant Administrator, as the approving official, delegates to Line Officers the following responsibilities:

- Recommending approval and disapproval decisions and the rationale for such recommendation, for each employee's request to participate in the telework program, in consultation with the employee's immediate supervisor, and in accordance with the NESDIS Telework Policy;
- Evaluating the impact of the program on the efficiency, effectiveness, and employee satisfaction of work operations within their organizations;
- Notifying and negotiating with Union Officials, when applicable, prior to implementation of the telework program;
- Ensuring that all employees are briefed on the basics of NESDIS's Telework Program and that all participating employees and supervisors attend a telework orientation session prior to participating and complete the web-based training exercise; and
- Reporting program participation and impact on mission, as requested by NOAA and NESDIS Telework Program Coordinators.

Supervisors are responsible for:

- The overall management and success of teleworking within their work units, including day-to-day operations, and modifications to individual telework agreements to meet mission needs or changing circumstances;
- Maintaining telework records for use in monitoring the program's effectiveness to include, at a minimum, the total number of employees eligible to telework, total number of eligible employees actually teleworking and the total number of eligible employees given the opportunity to telework;
- Identifying functions, or portions thereof, of positions suitable to participate in telework and sharing this information with all employees;
- Identifying employees eligible to participate in telework based on position analysis;
- Developing and amending performance work plans, as needed, for work performed away from the official duty station;
- Assigning appropriate work to be performed at the alternative work site.
- Adjusting individual telework arrangements to meet the needs of the units they supervise;

- Being familiar with DOC's Unclassified System Remote Access Security Policy and Minimum Implementation Standards, found at http://www.osec.doc.gov/cio/oipr/ITSec/remote_access.htm and implement the policy, as needed; and
- Providing tools and training necessary for employees to be knowledgeable in information technology communications.

Employees are required to:

- Actively participate in the development and completion of the NESDIS Telework Application, Agreement, and Safety Check List;
- Observe agreed-upon hours of work in accordance with established policies;
- Observe policies on requesting leave when leave is to be taken;
- Use Government equipment in accordance with regulations governing use;
- Adhere to and operate under the provisions of the telework agreement.
- Inform supervisors promptly of an injury or occupational disease occurring at the alternative work site;
- Pay for all operating costs incurred for set up and maintenance of an alternative work place not covered by the NESDIS implementing procedures;
- Ensure the security of the information and systems under their control; and
- Verify that the alternative work site complies with health and safety requirements, and maintain safety at the alternative work site.

8. POLICY AND IMPLEMENTING PROCEDURES

In accordance with Section 359 of Public Law 106-346 and policy promulgated by DOC and NOAA, it is NESDIS' policy to allow eligible employees to work at sites away from their official workplaces during all or a portion of their regular workweek, within the guidelines established in this document.

Voluntary Participation

NESDIS employee participation in telework is voluntary and employees may request to terminate their participation at any time. While telework is a management option, organizations may not direct or coerce employees to participate. Written agreements documenting the terms and conditions of telework arrangements will be drafted and maintained in accordance with this policy.

Modification and Termination

Telework is a management option, not an employee benefit or entitlement. Telework does not change the terms and conditions of employment. The operational needs of NESDIS are paramount. Employees who telework do not have an automatic right to continue to telework. Telework arrangements may be modified, adjusted, or terminated at any time deemed necessary by management or when requested by an employee. Management has the right to end an employee's use of telework, if, for example, the employee's performance declines or if the arrangement no longer meets the organization's needs.

Participation in telework will be terminated when the employee no longer meets the eligibility criteria.

Management shall provide notice of at least two (2) administrative work weeks, when feasible, but not less than seven (7) calendar days before modifying or terminating a telework agreement to allow the affected employee to make necessary arrangements. The reason for termination will be documented in a telework form (See NOAA Telework Termination Form A-3), signed by the Approving Official in NESDIS and furnished to the affected employee. This does not preclude management from requiring an employee to report to work on a specific telework day when the needs of the office dictate.

Equal Opportunity

Participation in telework is open to all eligible employees without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, marital status, parental status, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Employees with disabilities are also eligible to participate. For more information on accommodating employees with disabilities see GSA's FIRMR Bulletin C-8 http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=8798&contentType=GSA_BASIC.

Standards of Ethical Conduct

All NESDIS employees, including those who telework, are expected to comply with the Department of Commerce Standards of Ethical Conduct, Departmental Administrative Order (DAO) 202-735-A. Failure to comply with the standard while working at an alternative work site may result in termination of the telework agreement and disciplinary action for misconduct. DAO 202-735-A is available at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/omo/daos/202-735a.htm>.

Labor-Management Relations

In NESDIS offices where employees are represented by a labor organization accorded exclusive recognition, management has notified the labor organization of its intent to implement this policy and has negotiated in good faith. Nothing in this policy shall abrogate or override any collective bargaining agreements in effect on the date this policy is issued.

9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Telework Contacts for respective NESDIS line and staff offices are the primary contacts for reporting the status and success of their telework programs and preparing required reports, as needed, for inclusion in NOAA-wide reporting requirements mandated by the Department. At a minimum, line and staff offices

will be expected to furnish data to the NESDIS Telework Coordinator on the total number of employees eligible to telework, total number of eligible employees actually teleworking, and the total number of eligible employees given the opportunity to telework.

10. IDENTIFYING JOBS AND DUTIES SUITED FOR TELEWORK

Although many positions are suitable for telework, Public Law 106-346 recognizes that not all aspects of all jobs can be performed at alternative work sites. Supervisors, with the Approving Official's concurrence, are responsible for identifying positions, tasks, and functions of a position suitable for telework as well as those positions that, when considered in their entirety, are not suitable for telework. Employees may participate in this exercise but the responsibility remains with the supervisor.

Work suitable for telework depends on job content, rather than job series or title, type of appointment, or work schedule. However, even jobs not entirely suited for telework may contain some duties that can be performed at an alternative work site either on a regularly scheduled or intermittent basis.

The functions, duties, and tasks of positions suitable for telework typically include:

- Work activities that are portable and can be performed effectively outside the employee's conventional office with limited or no additional cost to the organization;
- Job tasks that are measurable or project-oriented;
- Client or customer contacts that are predictable or may be satisfied by frequently checking voice mail for messages; and
- Work contacts that can be adjusted to allow for telephone communications or conducted when the teleworking employee is at the conventional office.

In addition:

- The technology needed to perform the work at the alternative work site is available;
- The security of accessing office files, servers and data can be adequately assured; and
- Access to specialized equipment or materials not present at the alternative work site location may be scheduled for days when the employee is in the conventional office.

The functions, duties, and tasks of positions suitable for telework typically include:

- Reading
- Thinking
- Writing
- Reviewing

- Researching
- Analyzing
- Editing
- Scheduling
- Planning
- Communicating by telephone, fax, and personal computer
- Computer programming, data base development, data entry, and word processing
- Remote system administration and monitoring

The types of duties and tasks that normally would not be performed at an alternative work site location include:

- Satellite operations/maintenance
- Electrical, mechanical or telecom maintenance
- Archive maintenance
- Supervisory duties
- Duties that require face to face contact/business transactions
- Executive support functions

11. TELEWORK PARTICIPATION

Basic Eligibility Requirements

Although the Approving Official has decision authority, an employee and supervisor should work together to determine if telework is appropriate. An employee may be authorized to telework if:

- a) The immediate supervisor certifies that there are sufficient duties or work activities that can be suitably performed at an alternative work site;

- b) The employee's most recent performance appraisal is "Meets or Exceeds Expectations" (under the Pass/Fail performance system) or "Eligible" (under the Demonstration System) and in the performance of his/her duties, the employee consistently meets performance plan objectives in terms of quality and quantity of work, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in solving problems as they arise, and produces high quality written products which are unambiguous and convincing. The employee must demonstrate a high level of reliability in following supervisory and organizational policies and procedures in the performance of assigned duties;

- c) The employee's record of attendance shows no pattern of leave abuse or excessive absence, as determined by the organizational unit, and the immediate supervisor certifies that no additional factors, as described below, preclude the employee from entering into a telework agreement; and

d) The employee signs a written telework agreement.

Additional Requirements

When considering requests for telework, supervisors and the Approving Official should consider the following additional factors:

a) Conduct Is the employee's conduct considered acceptable? A record of misconduct does not necessarily prevent an employee from teleworking, but it can be considered when the nature of the misconduct may cast doubt on the employee's ability to successfully work at an alternative work site. For example, an employee who has been disciplined for unauthorized absences from the work site may not be a suitable candidate for telework.

b) Supervision Is the employee capable of working without close supervision? Telework may not be suitable for new employees, or those in developmental or on-the-job training assignments which require close monitoring.

c) Organization and Time Management Skill Is the employee effective in setting work priorities and meeting deadlines?

d) Contact with Others Does the employee need to have face-to-face contact with the supervisor, other employees, clients, or the general public in performing his or her duties? Is the employee a supervisor, team leader, or team member whose duties involve close interaction with subordinates or members of the workgroup or team?

e) Immovable Material Does the employee need access to material that cannot be moved from the conventional worksite?

f) Facilities and Equipment Is the organization capable of providing special equipment or facilities necessary for the employee to telework? Would it be costly for the organization to duplicate the same level of security at the alternative work site?

g) Other Does the employee need to be in the office to learn the organization? Will telework adversely affect the performance of the employee who teleworks, or his or her coworkers?

The Approving Official is responsible for ensuring consistency and equity with regard to the application of these factors within their organization.

12. AUTHORIZED TELEWORK ARRANGEMENTS

NESDIS' Telework Policy authorizes two types of telework arrangements, Intermittent and Regular, based on a realization that organizational and employee needs vary considerably and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Some employees may request only occasional periods of workplace flexibility, while others may request to telework for longer periods under regularly scheduled arrangements. The intent is to provide individual supervisors and employees with flexibility in establishing arrangements that are responsive to unique work and personal situations. NESDIS employees may request one of the following arrangements:

Intermittent and/or Episodic Defined as infrequent periods of time when projects/assignments have short turn-around times and require intense concentration. Under such circumstances, the employee typically works at an alternative work site for short periods, away from typical office distractions. This enables the employee to focus more effectively on completion of the assignment.

Regularly Scheduled An arrangement based on other than a temporary accommodation or condition, in which an employee works at an alternative work site for some portion of the workweek or pay period on a continuing basis. This arrangement may be used to:

- Reduce office space and associated costs;
- Attract and retain high-quality employees in key occupations and positions;
- Improve productivity;
- Improve job satisfaction;
- Improve service to clients;
- Reduce commuting time and expenses;
- Improve access for and reasonably accommodate employees with disabilities; and
- Accommodate an employee experiencing an incapacitating medical circumstance.

TELEWORK AGREEMENTS

NESDIS employees must use the forms provided in the appendices to request a telework arrangement. These forms are:

- A-1..... NOAA Telework Application and Agreement
- A-2..... NOAA Telework Safety Checklist
- A-3 NOAA Telework Termination Form

Prior to participating in a telework program, the employee must complete the attached forms to commence teleworking. Copies of approved forms will be maintained by the Approving Official, or Designee, for any reporting requirements.

Approved telework participants must sign a telework agreement before participating in telework. For employees who telework on an intermittent basis, a separate agreement for each telework episode is not necessary if the employee has signed an agreement to telework on an intermittent basis. **However, under intermittent agreements, each incident of telework must have advanced supervisory approval.** Individual telework agreements must be reviewed and renewed at least annually to remain in effect.

The telework agreement covers the terms and conditions of the telework arrangement. It also constitutes an agreement by the employee to adhere to applicable guidelines and policies. The telework agreement covers items such as the voluntary nature of the arrangement; duration of the telework agreement; hours and days of duty at each work site; responsibilities for timekeeping; leave approval; requests for overtime and compensatory time; performance requirements; proper use and safeguards of Government property and records; and standards of ethical conduct.

13. ESTABLISHING THE WORK SCHEDULE

Work performed away from the conventional office will vary depending upon the individual arrangements between the employee and the supervisor. Telework arrangements may be established on either a regularly scheduled or intermittent (episodic) basis. The process of establishing work schedules permits periodic adjustments to achieve an optimal schedule suiting organizational and employee requirements.

The Approving Official may allow the teleworker to work up to 2 days per week at the alternative work site. Successful telework programs demonstrate that employees should spend at least part of the work week in the conventional office for several reasons: (1) to minimize isolation and communication problems; (2) to facilitate integration of the teleworking employee with co-workers in the conventional office; and (3) to attend required meetings.

Work schedules identify the days and times the employee will work in each work setting. Work schedules may also include fixed times during the day for supervisor and employee telephone conversations. Establishing such times may be helpful to ensure ongoing communication. Electronic mail and voice mail offer additional supervisor and employee communication options.

14. HOURS OF DUTY, TIME AND ATTENDANCE, PAY AND LEAVE

Hours of Duty

Employees who telework will work the same schedules that they work in the regular office. Employees may work standard, flexible, or compressed schedules depending upon the agreement between the employee and the supervisor. Work schedules may be changed with advance supervisory approval and in accordance with established procedures. **Completely unstructured arrangements where employees work at the alternative work site are not permitted.** For additional information on hours of duty, consult the DOC Leave Handbook at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/information/handbook/handbook.htm>

Certification and Control of Time and Attendance

Proper monitoring and certification of employee work time is critical to the success of the program. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring and certifying teleworkers' time working to ensure that teleworkers are only paid for work performed and absences are properly accounted for. Possible accounting methods may include emails or phone calls to verify official start and end of the work day, a determination of reasonableness of work output for time spent, occasional supervisory telephone calls or emails to an employee during times the employee is scheduled to be on duty; and occasional visits by the supervisor to the employee's alternative work site.

Overtime/Compensatory Work

In accordance with DOC pay policy, overtime must be approved in advance (memo, e-mail, CD-81) to preclude any unintended liability for premium pay. **Employees who telework must have prior supervisory approval to work overtime or compensatory time.** Failure to obtain supervisory approval prior to working overtime or comp time may result in the termination of the telework arrangement, and the time worked may not be compensated. For additional information on overtime or comp time, consult the DOC Premium Pay Manual at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/information/handbook/handbook.htm>

Leave

NESDIS telework participants must adhere to all established leave procedures. The procedures for requesting leave remain unchanged for telework participants, i.e., teleworkers are still required to request and obtain approval of leave in advance of its use. For additional information on leave, consult the DOC Leave Handbook at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/information/handbook/handbook.htm>

Emergency Conditions

Although a variety of circumstances may affect individual situations, the principles governing administrative leave, dismissals, and closings remain unchanged. If the activity announces an early dismissal due to inclement weather to allow employees to return home safely and the employee is working at a Federal Interagency Telecommuting Center, the employee will follow the dismissal procedures of the Telecenter.

If the employee is working at home when an early dismissal due to inclement weather is announced, the employee shall exercise discretion as to whether (s)he is capable of continuing work for the rest of the regularly scheduled shift. When the office closes for an emergency due to inclement weather, e.g. a "snow closing day," employees who telework will be excused if the regular office is excused. When the activity announces an early dismissal of employees for non-emergency conditions such as on the day prior to a Federal holiday, employees who telework will be excused.

When an emergency affects only the alternative work site for a major portion of the workday, the employee is expected to report to the regular office or request supervisory approval of annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours off if on a flexible work schedule, or leave without pay. When an employee knows in advance of a situation that would preclude working at the alternative work site, the employee must either come to the conventional office or request leave. For additional information, see the DOC Leave Handbook, <http://ohrm.doc.gov/information/handbook/handbook.htm>.

Employees should not expect to use the telework program solely as a means of avoiding commuting to their normal workplace during periods of inclement weather. Participation in the telework program is year-round in nature, and is governed by the determination of the supervisor that the employee has sufficient duties or work activities that can be routinely performed at an alternate work site. In the event of inclement weather, an employee who participates in the telework program may, with the prior approval of his or her supervisor, rearrange his or her weekly schedule to telework on the day(s) in which the weather conditions are most severe. Employees who do not have a telework agreement previously in place should follow the guidance announced by the Office of Personnel Management for reporting for work in their geographic area.

15. ALTERNATIVE WORK SITE ISSUES

Workers' Compensation

Employees who telework are covered by the Federal Tort Claims Act and the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. Teleworkers qualify for workers' compensation for injuries or illnesses sustained while performing their official

duties at an alternative work site. This is one reason that it is vital that a specific authorized work location and work schedule be identified in advance and adhered to by the employee. (See further discussion below in "Facilities and Equipment Issues.")

NESDIS telework participants and their supervisors are referred to the NOAA Human Resources website at: [http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/hrmo/ Employee Benefits](http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/hrmo/EmployeeBenefits), for the Department's policy and applicable claim forms. Employees, in all situations, bear responsibility for informing their immediate supervisor of an injury at the earliest time possible. The supervisor's signature on the request for compensation attests only to what the supervisor can reasonably know, whether the event occurred at the conventional work site or at an alternative work site during official duty.

Workplace Environment

Any NESDIS employee participating in telework is expected to perform his or her duties and responsibilities at the telework location at a proficiency level equal to or greater than when performed at the conventional office and work for the entire time period scheduled. Consequently, it is critical that the alternative work-site be free from distractions and the employee free from obligations which would impair his or her ability to provide the same time and level of attention to the work product as when in the conventional office.

Dependent Care

No telework arrangement is authorized which entails the employee providing day care to any individual.

Official Duty Station

NESDIS employees' "official duty station" for pay purposes is their conventional office. (See Section 5. Official Duty Station.)

Alternative Office

A specific work location for performance of telework duties must be identified and authorized in advance. Requirements will vary depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed to perform the work. At a minimum, employees should be able to easily communicate by telephone with the supervisor, serviced clients, and coworkers during the telework day. In addition, employees are responsible for verifying and ensuring that their alternative work areas comply with health and safety requirements (See the self-certification Safety Checklist on page A-2). Work areas must be clean and free of obstructions, in compliance with all building codes, and free of hazardous materials. A supervisor may inspect the alternative work site for compliance with health and safety

requirements when deemed appropriate and with advance notice. An employee's request to telework may be disapproved or rescinded based on safety problems or the presence of hazardous materials.

16. GOVERNMENT OWNED EQUIPMENT

NESDIS is under no obligation to provide NESDIS-owned equipment to its employees solely for the purpose of teleworking. However, NESDIS-owned equipment may be provided if necessary for the performance of official duties, and if budgetary limits allow. NESDIS-owned equipment is to be used only for authorized purposes and the NESDIS retains ownership and control of the hardware, software, and data. In these situations, the NESDIS is responsible for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of such equipment. Teleworking employees must notify their supervisors immediately of any malfunction of NESDIS-owned equipment and return the equipment to the office for service.

Government-owned Computer Security Issues

Only hardware and software configurations procured by the Federal government and authorized by the NESDIS Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the alternative work site should be installed on NESDIS owned equipment. Under no circumstances may employees add non-government owned or unauthorized hardware or software to government equipment.

Computer Software Copyrights

Where individual license agreements allow for computer software to be installed on multiple computers, as long as only one is in use at any given time, employees may, with approval, install NESDIS-licensed computer software on the alternative work site computer to perform official work. Each software manufacturer's license agreements' terms must be examined by the NESDIS CIO or his or her designee on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not this is permissible. This will reduce telework expenses for the employee, while expanding the nature of work that may be performed at the alternative office.

Commercial Computer Software

The NESDIS Deputy Assistant Administrator has the authority to approve an employee's request to use software purchased by the Government at the alternative work site. The NESDIS CIO or his or her designee should ensure that the employee's use of government owned software is not prohibited by a license agreement. Where license agreements allow government-owned computer software to be installed on an employee's personally owned equipment at no additional charge, the government may provide software for installation and use on the teleworker's personally owned equipment. Examples of this software may include anti-virus software, personal firewall software, internet browser software,

or general purpose software such as word processing or spreadsheet. Questions about software installation and license agreements should be directed to the NESDIS CIO.

Personal Computer Equipment

If the teleworking employee elects to use his or her personal computer equipment at the alternative work site, the employee is responsible for the purchasing, servicing, and maintenance costs associated with that equipment. The Government will not reimburse employees for such costs. The computer must have anti-virus software and all files transferred to the government computer, electronically or by disk, must be scanned.

Computer Software Updates

Whether government-owned commercial software or personally-owned software is installed on an employee's personally-owned equipment, such software shall, at a minimum, include the following:

- Anti-virus software, regularly updated;
- Personal firewall software, regularly updated; and
- Operating system software, updated regularly with required IT security patches.

Compliance with NESDIS IT security policy <https://intranet.nesdis.noaa.gov/security/sec-pol919l.pdf> may require the deployment of a remote agent on the employee's personally owned equipment to ensure automated and timely updates of appropriate software.

Installation of Telephone Lines

NESDIS will not normally authorize appropriated funds to be used to pay for telephone line installation and monthly service charges for telephone, cable, DSL, or ISDN lines at the alternative work site. There may be special circumstances when, for the benefit of the Government, the use of appropriated funds may be approved. In these cases, the Approving Official will consult with the NESDIS Chief Financial Officer prior to approving the expenditure. The Government cannot pay for installation or monthly service charges for a single telephone, cable, DSL, or ISDN line that will be used for both Government and personal purposes. Government calling cards may be used by teleworking employees to make long distance telephone calls to conduct official government business. Employees are required to adhere to the rules governing usage of government telephone lines for personal purposes at the alternative work site.

Personal Expenses

The teleworking employee is expected to pay for costs incurred in operating an alternative office. As a consequence, the following represent cost issues for employees electing to work at an alternative work site:

- NESDIS will not reimburse employees for additional costs, such as utilities or insurance, associated with working at an alternative work site. Potential savings to the employee resulting from reduced commuting, meals, etc., may offset any incidental increase in costs to teleworkers.
- If the employee elects to furnish his or her own workstation at the alternative work site, NESDIS will not reimburse the employee for the purchasing costs. In addition, the employee is responsible for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of such equipment. Note: A typical workstation requires the following: 1) a personal computer; 2) a modem; 3) telecommunications software; 4) internet service; 5) internet browser software; and 6) general purpose software (e.g. word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation graphics software).
- NESDIS will provide anti-virus and personal firewall software for employees who request it.

17. ACCOUNTABLE PROPERTY

Offices must ensure that property management procedures (http://www.pps.noaa.gov/New_menu/use.htm) are followed regarding their accountable property (computers), whether owned or leased, to ensure that NOAA's property is immediately identifiable and that the physical location of automated data processing equipment (ADPE) and software is known. For additional information, refer to NOAA Personal Property at <http://www.pps.noaa.gov>.

18. SECURE OPERATIONS

The Department's CIO is responsible for issuing and maintaining policies and minimum implementation standards for remote access security, which includes access to information technology systems required for networks. These policies and minimum implementation standards outline responsibilities of CIOs as well as teleworkers to enable an effective working environment for the teleworker and the protection of Department systems from undue risk.

The NESDIS CIO, with the support of the NESDIS IT Security Officers, is responsible for establishing teleworking IT security procedures specific to NESDIS and providing secure telecommuting resources and operational controls commensurate with the sensitivity of the data processed, consistent with policies

and minimum implementation standards provided by the Department's CIO, and NOAA's CIO.

Teleworkers are responsible for following DOC and NOAA Information Technology Security Program Policy, Remote Access Security Policy and Minimum Implementation Standards, all applicable policies contained in the Department's Information Technology Management Handbook, and his and her operating unit's teleworking IT security policies to maximize the security of the information and systems under their control. Departmental IT policies are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/cio/policy_guidance.htm NOAA IT security policies are available at <https://www.csp.noaa.gov/policies/index.html> NESDIS IT security policies are available at <https://intranet.nesdis.noaa.gov/security/sec-pol9191.pdf>. The workplace and workstation must be set up to afford secure information processing, including the proper storage of sensitive DOC, NOAA, NESDIS, and proprietary information in both electronic and paper form. The workstation must not be the source of vulnerabilities to the DOC, NOAA and NESDIS networks.

Personal computer software and operating systems used for telework must be properly licensed. Personal computers must also meet the following criteria for use in telework:

- Configure computers to not "remember" NOAA or NESDIS passwords;
- Do not share or reveal NOAA or NESDIS usernames and passwords to anyone (including family members) to prevent unauthorized access to NOAA and NESDIS IT systems and data; and
- Install and configure to automatically update (at least bi-monthly), and run anti-virus software on personally owned equipment. Anti-virus software is available from NESDIS.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that teleworkers follow the security practices outlined in NESDIS' teleworking IT security policies. Supervisors must ensure that the designated work space or work station of the employee has adequate physical or environmental security measures in place to protect the equipment from being accessed by unauthorized individuals. This can be accomplished by having the employee specifically identify the proposed work area and certify in writing the security measures that will be used. (A checklist, similar to the one being used to certify the safety of the work area may be useful for this purpose.) Examples of measures that may be acceptable, depending upon the information include denying unauthorized individuals, including family members, access to work area or by securing portions of the work area by locking them when not in use.

All NESDIS employees must complete the NOAA IT Security Training prior to getting approval for Telework.

Telecommunication access to Government computers presents special security concerns. A combination of physical controls, unique user identifiers, passwords, terminal identifiers, access control software, and strict adherence to security procedures is required to protect the information from unauthorized access. Supervisors must ensure that employees understand and adhere to IT security policies regarding ID's, passwords, access codes, etc., that are assigned.

Be aware that telephones represent a security vulnerability because conversations can be easily intercepted. Therefore, discussions of work assignments on non-secure telephones must not entail any classified information.

Teleworkers must comply with security procedures to protect Government information stored on magnetic media of the workplace or privately -owned computers when the computers are repaired or serviced. When the hard disk of a remote workplace computer is inoperable, arrangements must be made to remove sensitive information from the hard disk prior to having the computer serviced. This same procedure must be followed regardless of whether the computer belongs to the employee or the Government. Employees must contact the NESDIS IT System Security Officer for information about such procedures.

Teleworking privileges may be revoked if IT security violations occur.

19. FEDERAL INTERAGENCY TELECOMMUTING CENTERS.

Authorized telecenters are those established by the General Services Administration. For a fee (per work station, per month, and depending on location), employees have access to a wide array of up-to-date equipment, including modular work stations, a telephone with local and FTS service, a high speed computer with a color monitor and modem, laser printer, facsimile machine, multi-function copier, conference and storage space. NOAA will consolidate and manage requests for workstations at the Federal Telecommuting Centers and establish one agreement. Therefore, requests for use of a telecommuting center must be made to the NESDIS Telework Coordinator on a quarterly basis for the succeeding quarter. The NESDIS Telework Coordinator will forward NESDIS HQ requests to NOAA's Telework Coordinator. The cost for the use of a telecommuting center will be absorbed in a charge back from NOAA to NESDIS. Those NESDIS offices located outside the DC Metro area will need to coordinate with their Administrative Support Center's Telework Coordinator and 'cc' the NESDIS Telework Coordinator.

A listing of Federal Interagency Telecommuting Centers can be found at:
<http://www.telework.gov>

20. PREPARING FOR THE TELEWORK ARRANGEMENT

The following actions are to be taken when establishing a telework arrangement:

- The interested employee submits a completed application and agreement to the immediate supervisor (See A-1 - Telework Application and Agreement);
- The employee and supervisor discuss the proposed telework arrangement and the type of work to be done by the employee at an alternative work site;
- If a suitable arrangement is reached, the employee and supervisor complete the Telework Application and Agreement and the Self-certification Safety Checklist if the alternative work site is in the employee's home (See A-1 - Application and Agreement and A-2 - Safety Checklist);
- The employee and supervisor complete the IT Security Checklist if the employee will be using personally owned computer equipment for remotely accessing the NESDIS LAN. The Checklist is available from the IT Help Desk;
- The telework agreement is signed by the employee and supervisor, the Recommending Official and the Approving Official;
- The supervisor verifies that the employee has completed the Security Awareness Training; and
- Depending on whether the alternative work site is the employee's home or a Federal Interagency Telecommuting Center, one of the following actions will be necessary:
 - To use a Federal Interagency Telecommuting Center, arrangements must first be made to tentatively reserve a workstation for the employee at the desired telecenter through the NESDIS Telework Coordinator;
 - If the alternative work site is the employee's home, the employee must:

Obtain information required for accessing the secured operations of the conventional office. Verify that all required IT security requirements have been met, i.e., firewall and virus scan software installed on computer used at the alternative work site.

If the employee will use his or her personal equipment, arrangements must be made to:

Borrow software installation disks (or CD's) and installation instructions for installing on the employee's personal computer at the alternative work site (if software package's licensing agreement allows).

21. PRIVACY ACT, SENSITIVE OR CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Decisions regarding whether to allow the handling or removal of sensitive data, as well as records subject to the Privacy Act, from the conventional office to the alternative work site for telework are delegated to individual supervisors who permit employees to work at an alternative work site. Care must be taken to ensure records subject to the Privacy Act and sensitive non-classified data are not disclosed to anyone except those who are authorized access to perform their duties. Classified or proprietary data may not be removed from employees' official work sites to off-site locations. NESDIS line and staff offices allowing employees to access records subject to the Privacy Act from a remote work site must maintain appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to ensure the security and confidentiality of the records. When records subject to the Privacy Act are maintained or used by employees working at home or at other remote locations, line and staff offices should revise the appropriate record system notices to indicate that the alternative system location is authorized. In general, privacy act files should not be stored on the home computer regardless of who owns it.

22. TELEWORK ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

All NESDIS employees shall be briefed on the NESDIS Telework Policy. Two briefings must be completed prior to initiating telework. First, all employees participating in telework must take NOAA's telework web based training at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~hrmo/telwk-welcome.htm> prior to beginning their telework schedule. Additionally, all participating employees and their supervisors must complete supplemental training on the specifics of the NESDIS Telework Program. The NESDIS Telework Coordinator will develop and distribute the NESDIS briefing materials.

23. OTHER ISSUES

Dependent Care

Telework is not intended to serve as a substitute for dependent care. Generally, telework will not significantly reduce dependent care costs. However, telework may reduce dependent care costs by reducing the number of hours of care

necessary due to commuting time saved. In some cases, it could eliminate the need for before or after school care.

The opportunity to participate in the program is offered only with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that a proper work environment is maintained (e.g., dependent care arrangements are made so as to not interfere with the work, personal disruptions such as non-business telephone calls and visitors are kept to a minimum, etc.) The employee and his and her family should understand that the home office is just that, a space set aside for the employee to work.

Tax benefits

Generally, an employee who uses a portion of his or her home does not qualify for any Federal tax deductions. However, employees should consult their tax advisors or the Internal Revenue Service for information on tax laws and interpretations that address their specific circumstances.