Telework
Implementation Guidelines

For joint review by employee and supervisor prior to submission of on-line telework agreement.

Telework is defined as the execution of all or part of job responsibilities at an alternate work site for a minimum of eight hours a week or 32 hours a month.

Occasional telework does not require the completion of a telework agreement. However, managers can consider completion of ‘standing’ agreements for employees who may request the option to telework due to weather, distance or other concerns on an irregular basis. Please note that each telework instance requires supervisor approval, assurance that no children needing care are in the home, and a system for communication and measuring work completed. It is also the supervisor’s responsibility to assure that all equipment is in compliance with VT Policy 7010 and that security of data, Policies 7025 and 1060, are followed (policies described below).

- All arrangements are voluntary on the part of the employee (unless written into the position description), require supervisor approval, and must not interfere with regular office or department function.
- In certain cases, a telework arrangement can be considered a reasonable accommodation for an employee with a disability covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Contact VT Human Resources for more information.
- Employees whose job descriptions include travel are not considered to be teleworking.
- Telework arrangements are always determined on a case by case basis; final decisions rest with supervisor and can be rescinded by supervisor, or employee, at any time.

If children or adults in need of primary care are in the alternate work location during employee’s work hours, some other individual must be present to provide that care. Telework is NOT intended to serve as a substitute for child or adult care.

VT Human Resources recommends a trial period (e.g. one semester or three months) for any telework arrangement. Following that period, supervisor and employee should review agreement, update if needed, then re-submit. If telework arrangement is not meeting needs of the department or employee, agreement should be terminated.

Any telework arrangement must support or enhance office/department mission (see Business Rationale below). High quality office function and customer service must not be compromised.

University telework policy applies to eligible classified/university staff and AP faculty. It is an accepted practice for teaching and research faculty to carry out their work with varied schedules on campus and at alternate locations, therefore a formal telework agreement will not be required for T/R faculty unless the normal work assignment is consistently at an alternate location (i.e. not the standard assigned office).
A. Determining Eligibility for Telework

**Business Rationale** – How will this telework arrangement benefit the work team, office or the University? Justification may include, but is not limited to - increased productivity, decreased distraction, improved customer service, enhanced employee morale, more efficient use of space or equipment, improved worklife balance, and/or lower operating costs.

**Managerial Oversight** – Supervisors sometimes believe they have to oversee staff at all times. Telework calls for a focus on results and productivity rather than face time, and requires trust and effective communication between supervisor and employee (see communication tips below).

**Position** -Managers and employees should thoroughly analyze position descriptions, responsibilities, and how the work is performed. Appropriate positions that may be those that:

- Require independent work
- Require little customer or co-worker interaction
- Require concentration
- Result in specific, measurable outcomes
- Can be evaluated by output
- For which needed equipment and technology can be easily accessed

**Employee** - Managers and employees should also consider employee work style. Employee characteristics indicative of success often include:

- The ability to work productively on one’s own
- Self motivation and flexibility
- Thorough knowledge of position responsibilities
- A low need for social interaction
- Above average performance record
- Excellent organizational and time management skills
- Effective communication skills
- Honesty and dependability

B. Conditions of Employment

- The approved **Telework Agreement** is retained in the employee’s on-line HR file, accessible by supervisor and department head. A printed copy should be retained in the employee’s paper file as well.

- Employee will meet with supervisor in central workplace to receive assignments and to review completed work as necessary.

- **Performance expectations** and evaluations will not change as a result of telework. Conditions of employment will remain the same, and expectations should be clear and measurable. Supervisor will evaluate employee’s job performance in accordance with applicable performance planning and evaluation, and probationary policies.

- Employee agrees to limit performance of official assigned duties to the central workplace or department-approved alternate work location within agreed upon hours.

- **Salary and benefits** will not be affected by telework.

- Arrangements that assure **adequate communication** between employee, co-workers, supervisor and customers must be established. For example:
  - establish regular check in times or plans to email when workday begins and ends
  - use a shared calendars to post schedules of teleworkers, on-site colleagues and supervisors
- use basic communication tools (phone, email, instant messaging) and consider collaborative tools such as audio and video conferencing
- coordinate staff meetings and telework schedules, promoting team cohesion and social interaction; it may be necessary for teleworker to come to the workplace for such events

- **The Telework Agreement does not automatically** go with an employee in a new position, or apply when a position previously done via telework is assumed by a new employee.

### C. Hours of Work

- **The required number of work hours** will not change, and employees are responsible for reporting time worked, leave used, and for adhering to university and state attendance policies.

- **Overtime Worked:** Telework schedules will be treated no differently than regular work hours. Any overtime must be approved by supervisor. Failure to do so may result in termination of the telework arrangement and/or disciplinary action. See Virginia Tech Policy 4320 regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act for more information.

- For **non-exempt employees**, hours worked must be recorded just as they would be during normal working hours at the central location.
  - **Sick/annual leave** is recorded based on the number of hours employee is scheduled to work on the day s/he uses the leave, whether s/he is at the central or alternate work location.
  - **Paid holidays** will count as 8 hours if falling on a day scheduled for telework.
  - **A meal break of at least 20 minutes** must be provided to employees working more than 6 consecutive hours. It is NOT included in hours worked and must recorded.
  - **Days worked at alternate location** must be approved by supervisor, and must allow for necessary office coverage (i.e. not exclusively Mondays and Fridays).

- **Authorized closings** will apply to the teleworker as s/he will be unable to remain in contact with supervisor and co-workers. Essential employees are the exception and will receive compensatory leave for hours worked.

- Supervisors may require employees to **report to central workplace** for work-related events, or may meet with her/him in the alternate location, if needed.

- **Telework is not to be used in place of sick or annual leave**, however, in consultation with HR, a department may choose to offer telework arrangements as an opportunity for partial or full return to work based on University policy and the criteria normally applied to decisions regarding the approval of telework.

### D. Safety

- Virginia Tech does **not assume responsibility for injury** to any persons other than the teleworker arising out of duties at the telework site during the set work hours. Employee is covered by the Commonwealth’s Workers’ Compensation Program if injured while performing official duties at the central workplace or an alternate work location and must immediately notify the supervisor of an injury sustained at a telework site and complete an Employer’s Accident Report- see [http://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/workerscomp/index.html](http://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/workerscomp/index.html)

- Supervisors may wish to include additional conditions in their work agreements that require employees to confirm that the alternate work location is, to the best of their knowledge, free of recognized hazards that could cause physical harm. Employees should agree to practice the same safety habits they would use while at the university and to maintain safe conditions in their alternate work locations.
E. Security of Information

- Employees working in remote locations, and their supervisors, must adhere to all applicable security procedures in order to ensure confidentiality and security of data. See policy 7025, www.policies.vt.edu/7025.pdf, for guidance including federal regulations; policy 1060 addresses protection of social security numbers -www.policies.vt.edu/1060.pdf.

- Employee’s remote work computer shall be in compliance with all Virginia Tech guidelines for uses of hardware and software including virus protection software, licensing provisions, system security and passwords. VT policy 7010 at www.policies.vt.edu/7010.pdf provides guidance in ensuring that all technology resources and services are as stable, secure and trustworthy as possible.

- The employee will protect all confidential University documents from unauthorized access.

- All products, documents and records that are used, developed, or revised while teleworking remain the property of Virginia Tech.

F. Step by step checklists for employees and managers interested in Telework

**Employee Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read the telework policy and guidelines. Consider whether telework will allow you to meet your performance goals, and the mission of the department and university.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think through the details of completing your work, interacting with your colleagues and customers, and maintaining high quality service when working from an alternate location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider your personal work style, and how that may influence your success in working from an alternate location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate your alternate workplace relative to comfort, privacy, access to necessary equipment, freedom from noise and other distractions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate a conversation with your supervisor regarding telework, including a joint review of related procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you both agree to a plan, complete the Telework Agreement and review with your supervisor for approval and signature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR recommends a trial period (e.g. one semester or three months) for a new telework agreement. Upon completion of trial period, sit down with your supervisor and discuss the success of the agreement from each of your perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisit the agreement at least annually. If the plan is working effectively, work together to renew it, then supervisor will send an updated copy with signature and date to HR.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Supervisor Checklist**

| Be familiar with the telework policy, implementation guidelines, and agreement form. |
Be open to conversation from members of your staff regarding the telework option. If approached, help her/him think through implications to determine if this option might be effective for the department, as well as the employee.

Be proactive in considering whether a telework position might help your department better achieve its goals, and/or improve the employee’s productivity, work/life balance, or financial situation.

Provide a rationale for the final decision (to approve OR deny a request).

If an agreement is reached, have the employee complete the Telework Agreement. Review the completed document with the employee and sign.

Maintain original, signed agreement in department file, and provide signed copies to employee and to Human Resources.

HR recommends a trial period (e.g. one semester or three months) for a new telework agreement. Upon completion of trial period, sit down with your supervisor and discuss the success of the agreement from each of your perspectives.

Revisit the agreement at least annually. If the plan is working effectively, work together to renew it, then send an updated copy with signatures and dates to HR.