

1. What is the definition of telework?

The official definition of "telework" can be found in the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (the Act): "the term 'telework' or 'teleworking' refers to a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of such employee's position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work." In practice, "telework" is a work arrangement that allows and employee to perform work, during any part of regular, paid hours, at an approved alternative worksite (e.g., home, telework center). This definition of telework includes what is generally referred to as remote work but does not include any part of work done while on official travel or mobile work. You may also be familiar with the terms "telecommuting" and "flexible workplace" and both are sometimes used to describe what we now generally refer to as "telework." While "remote" and "mobile" work are also terms that are sometimes used as synonyms for telework, they tend to operate differently than telework as is apparent in the detailed operational definition. For consistency, OPM recommends that all agencies use the term "telework" for reporting purposes and for all other activities related to policy and legislation, as defined in the Act.

2. Is there telework training available for OCAO employees?

Yes, in fact, it is mandatory that OCAO employees complete the OPM web-based [employee training modules](#) **before** participating in telework.

3. How do I print the OPM certificate of completion once I finish the online telework training?

The manager and teleworker training both offer the opportunity to print a certificate once you complete all of the modules. Some users have had difficulty printing the certificates, due to information technology security restrictions established by their agencies. If you have such problems you will need to work with the NOAA help desk at 301-713-0541 to resolve these issues.

4. Can an OCAO Director or manager deny a request to telework?

Yes, Directors and/or managers can deny a request to telework, based on business reasons and subject to limitations on telework participation described in the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. 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 agency's employee relations staff in Human Resources to discuss your agency's procedures.

5. Can an OCAO teleworker's schedule be different on their telework days?

Subject to the OCAO telework policy and 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 the OCAO Director/manager, collective bargaining agreements, and the business needs of the organization.

6. 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.

7. 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 [996 KB], 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. Per the OCAO Telework Agreement, "When practicable, teleworkers are expected to work in the case of a continuity event such as a national or local emergency, during an emergency event involving inclement weather, or another situation that may result in a disruption to normal office operations."

8. Do I need an OCAO telework agreement before I can telework?

Yes. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 mandates that a written telework agreement between the agency manager 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 ad-hoc basis (this is also referred to as situational or episodic telework).

9. Where do I submit my OCAO telework application?

The OCAO application process for a telework arrangement is completely determined by OCAO policy. Please contact your Director/manager to discuss this process.

10. Can OCAO managers or supervisors telework?

Per the Chief Administrative Officer, managers and supervisors are currently only allowed to telework episodically or on an ad-hoc basis.

11. What equipment will the employee need at the home-based worksite and who will provide it?

OCAO will provide the telework participant's government-issued equipment to permit teleworking for all eligible employees (as remote access is only possible on government-issued computers). Teleworking employees must notify their supervisor immediately of any malfunction of Government-owned equipment. For teleworkers working at approved alternative worksites, when an issue cannot be resolved remotely, employees may be directed to bring their devices to the nearest OCAO/OCIO office where local support and/or replacement parts can be dispatched. There will be no on-site IT support provided at the AW.

When Government-owned equipment is being used, the employee must only use this equipment for authorized purposes and the Government retains ownership and control of the hardware, software, and data. Participants will maintain reasonable care of all OCAO-owned material. OCAO acts as the insurer for damage, theft or other loss (e.g. fire, flood, etc.) of the OCAO material.

12. Can OCAO teleworkers follow an alternative work schedule?

Yes. There is no Government wide restriction on teleworkers following alternative work schedules. However, individual OCAO Directors/managers may restrict the combination of telework and other flexibilities, so Directors/managers and employees should discuss this issue.

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

OCAO is not required to visit the teleworker's home to inspect it for safety and ergonomics. The OCAO MTI application (see appendix 3) includes a self-certify safety/security checklist that must complete.

14. When should I or shouldn't I telework?

The location that is required to provide the best customer experience and makes the most sense is where you should be working; whether it's by working at home, offsite, or being at your duty station in the office. It's what you do that matters, not where you are.

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

Each federal agency is responsible for developing an approval process within the framework established by Public Law 106-346, section 359 and OPM's interpretation of the law. Generally, most telework requests are referred to the immediate supervisor for approval or disapproval and may be reviewed through the accepted management channels of the agency. In OCAO, your immediate supervisor is responsible for monitoring, approving, or disapproving telework requests.

16. Does an OCAO employee have a right to telework?

No. Subject to any applicable union agreement, Directors/managers decide whether an employee can work off-site, depending on the nature of the position and the characteristics of the employee and the workgroup. In addition, management has the right to 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 if the arrangement no longer meets the organization's needs.

17. Can an agency force an employee to work at home?

Generally, no, unless telework is a condition of employment or it is required to continue government operations in times of emergency. In these instances, an employee may be required to work at home, a telework center, or an approved workplace.

18. How can I make sure that my telework hours are being recorded accurately?

It is important that OCAO employees report the number of hours and day on his or her timesheet in web T&A when teleworking. Web T&A currently provides a respective payroll code for Teleworking. This code MUST be used when an employee has teleworked for a respective day or portion thereof. As with regular working hours, vacation, sick leave, etc., the employee is responsible for accurately recording how and when he or she worked during the payroll cycle.

19. What is the impact on the main office when some employees are working at an alternative worksite?

OCAO telework was implemented with appropriate policies, practices, and guidelines that do not impact the main office in any adverse manner. OCAO policy has been established to minimize adverse impact on other OCAO staff members before OCAO employees begin to work at alternative sites. The overall interests of OCAO must take precedence. An OCAO Director/manager may require an employee to work at the main worksite on a day previously scheduled for an alternative worksite, if the need arises. **Teleworking should not create an added burden on the staff remaining in the office.** An equitable distribution of workload should be maintained, and methods should be instituted to ensure that main office employees are not required to carry out the teleworker's responsibilities.

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

Government 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).

21. Who is responsible for maintaining and servicing government or privately owned equipment used at the alternative worksite?

Generally, OCAO/OCIO will be responsible for the service and maintenance of all government owned equipment, per Department of Commerce Property Procedures. Please check with your

Property Accountability Officer and Property Custodian for Personal Property Rules & Regulations. Teleworkers using their privately-owned equipment are responsible for service and maintenance.

22. Should I report occasional telework to my timekeeper?

Check with your timekeeper and Director/manager concerning the appropriate telework code.

23. Will OCAO contractors be allowed to telework?

Contractors can only telework if it is agreed to/required under the restrictions of their contract. This policy does not apply to contractors. Contractors are managed through the confines of their contracts not by OCAO Directors/Managers.

24. Can non-government computers be used at the telework site?

Currently non-government computers can't be used at the telework site since the NOAA Help Desk will not install a virtual protocol network on an employee's personal computer for security reasons.

25. Will OCAO be paying for connectivity to an employee's telework site?

OCAO will not pay for connectivity from the alternate work site. High speed networks as well as other connectivity requests and or problems must be handled by the employee at their expense.

26. How many days per pay period is an employee allowed to telework?

OCAO employees must report physically at least twice each biweekly pay period on a regular and recurring basis to the regular worksite of the employee's position (i.e. the place where the employee would normally work absent a telework agreement).