



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

March 4, 2025

PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO: 25-01

SUBJECT: Telework Policy

1. PURPOSE. This Personnel Bulletin (PB) updates the Departmental policy for participating in the Department of the Interior (DOI or Department) Telework Program. The PB aligns with Presidential Memorandum “*Return to In-Person Work*,” dated January 20, 2025, and subsequent Departmental Direction on Interior’s Compliance with President Trump’s Presidential Memorandum Return to In-Person Work and Accompanying OPM Guidance. This update removes core telework as an approved telework arrangement except in very limited circumstances related to an approved accommodation or other approved exemption. Except in limited circumstances as clarified above, situational/ad-hoc telework arrangement is generally the only available telework type permitted consistent with the requirements set forth below. This PB supersedes PB 21-07, Telework Program, dated July 23, 2021, and supersedes the existing policy in 370 Departmental Manual (DM) 226, Telework Program, until corresponding changes in the DM are made.

2. AUTHORITIES.

- A. Title 5 of the United States Code (USC), Chapter 63
- B. Title 5 of the USC, Chapter 65
- C. Title 5 of the USC, Chapter 81
- D. Title 40 of the USC, Chapter 5, Section 587
- E. Part 531 of Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)
- F. Part 550 of Title 5 CFR
- G. Part 630 of Title 5 CFR
- H. Part 2635 of Title 5 CFR
- I. Part 1630 of Title 29 CFR

3. COVERAGE. This policy applies to all DOI employees, including those in supervisory positions, Senior Executives (SES), Senior Level (SL), and Senior Technical (ST) positions, and supersedes any other Departmental or Bureau/Office policies or procedures that conflict with this policy.

4. DEFINITIONS.

- A. **Alternative Worksite.** A location, other than the employee’s official worksite, that has been approved for the performance of assigned official duties as designated on the telework agreement. It may be an employee’s home, a telework center, or other approved worksite that is conducive to performing the official duties.

- B. **Dependent Care.** The support and nurturing of persons who cannot meet their own needs such as children, elders, or other dependent adults.
- C. **Official Duty Station.** For the purposes of this policy, the term “official duty station” has the same meaning as “official worksite,” as defined at 5. C.F.R. § 531.602, which refers to the official location of an employee’s position of record as determined under 5 C.F.R. §531.605.
- D. **Official Disciplinary Action.** Any disciplinary action that results in the placement of a document in an employee’s electronic Official Personnel Folder (e.g., written reprimand, suspension, removal, reduction in grade/pay).
- E. **Situational/Ad-hoc Telework.** A type of flexible work arrangement in which eligible employees telework on a case-by-case basis without a set schedule (i.e., the hours worked are not part of a previously approved, ongoing, and/or regular schedule). This may include telework in response to emergencies, severe weather conditions, natural disasters, or other incidents that cause disruption of Government operations or are otherwise in the best interest of the agency, as necessary and appropriate). An employee with an approved situational/ad-hoc telework arrangement must obtain advance approval from their supervisor. *This arrangement is generally the only authorized telework flexibility permitted across the Department.*
- F. **Telework.** A work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of their position, and other authorized activities, from an approved alternative worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.
- G. **Telework Agreement (Form DI-3457).** A written agreement that outlines the terms and conditions for an employee authorized to telework, as approved by the appropriate management official. A signed telework agreement is required for an employee’s participation in the telework program. Bureaus/Offices may not alter, supplement or modify the Telework Agreement (Form DI-3457).
- H. **Teleworker.** An eligible employee who has completed the required telework training, has an approved telework agreement in place, and has the required work necessities (e.g., equipment, materials) to effectively perform their duties at an approved alternative worksite on a situational/ad-hoc basis. Also referred to as a “telework-ready” employee.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- A. **The Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer** is responsible for:
 - 1. Serving as the Department’s Telework Managing Officer.
 - 2. Overseeing policy development and implementation related to the Department's Telework Program and submission of required reports to the U.S. Office of

Personnel Management (OPM) or other government organizations as may be required.

3. Advising Departmental leadership on the administration of the DOI Telework Program and serving as the Department's primary liaison with OPM on telework matters.

B. **The Office of Human Capital, Workforce Relations Division** is responsible for:

1. Administering the DOI Telework Program in accordance with governing law and Departmental policies.
2. Serving as a resource for Bureau/Office Telework Coordinators on telework matters.
3. Developing DOI Telework Program policy and coordinating policy and procedural changes with the Bureau/Office Telework Coordinators.
4. Preparing reports on telework metrics and providing information regarding employee telework agreements as required by OPM, other Federal agencies, Departmental leadership, and the Office of the Solicitor.

C. **Office of the Chief Information Officer** is responsible for:

1. Providing guidance for enterprise information technology capabilities and data security required to support telework.
2. Overseeing the evaluation of new and emerging technologies that facilitate telework and approving them for Department-wide use, as appropriate.
3. Establishing criteria and guidelines for using and protecting Government furnished equipment (GFE) and non-GFE, including personally owned equipment to access DOI information systems and networks to perform telework.

D. **Bureau Directors and Equivalent Office Heads** are responsible for:

1. Ensuring that their organizations are in full compliance with the requirements of this policy.
2. Establishing implementing procedures, as needed, for situational telework as a work flexibility arrangement, to include integrating telework into continuity of operations (COOP) plans.
3. Holding subordinate supervisors and managers accountable for implementing telework in accordance with this policy and applicable Bureau/Office implementing procedures.

E. **Bureau/Office Telework Coordinators**. Each Bureau and equivalent Office will designate a Telework Coordinator to serve as the Bureau/Office contact. The Bureau/Office Telework Coordinators are responsible for:

1. Providing assistance and guidance to Bureau/Office employees, supervisors, and managers regarding telework.
2. Preparing and submitting periodic reports to the Department's Office of Human Capital on Bureau/Office telework data and metrics.
3. Preparing and submitting reports to Bureau/Office leadership (e.g., Bureau or Regional Directors or equivalent Office Heads) on telework data and providing information regarding employee telework agreements.
4. Maintaining Bureau/Office employee telework records.

F. **Servicing Human Resources Offices (SHRO)** are responsible for:

1. Ensuring vacancy announcements and position descriptions contain accurate information regarding the suitability of a position for telework.
2. Ensuring that all positions and employee telework eligibility codes are correctly reflected in the Federal Personnel and Payroll System.
3. Providing assistance and guidance to Bureau/Office managers on managing and supervising teleworkers.

G. **Supervisors** are responsible for:

1. In consultation with the servicing SHRO, determining an employee's eligibility for telework and notifying the employee, as appropriate.
2. In consultation with the servicing SHRO, determining whether the duties of a position are suitable for situational/ad-hoc telework. Each time a position is modified, this determination needs to be confirmed.
3. Executing situational/ad-hoc telework agreements with employees who request to and are permitted to perform telework on a situational/ad-hoc basis; ensuring that required telework training is completed prior to allowing the employee to telework; and terminating telework agreements when employees are no longer eligible to telework, or the teleworking arrangement fails to meet organizational needs.
4. Upon approval of a telework agreement, establishing and communicating clear expectations with employees while teleworking regarding communications, meeting attendance, duty hours, the accurate coding of telework for time and attendance purposes, and notification procedures for requesting situational/ad-hoc telework.

5. Ensuring employees protect and secure agency records and sensitive information consistent with established DOI policies when teleworking.
6. Reviewing and recertifying situational telework agreements annually to validate whether the arrangement is still effective and in the best interest of the agency.
7. Ensuring adequate worksite office coverage during business hours so that mission operations continue to be carried out efficiently and effectively.
8. Maintaining records of direct reports' current telework agreements.

H. **Teleworkers** are responsible for:

1. Securing approval of their telework agreement and completing required telework training prior to teleworking.
2. Ensuring there is no diminishment of individual performance or agency requirements and that they have sufficient work assignments conducive to telework.
3. Complying with their approved telework agreement and adhering to Departmental policies while working at the alternative worksite. These policies include but are not limited to: Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch and other applicable ethics laws and regulations; Acceptable Use of the Internet; Conduct and Discipline; Time and Attendance; and Records Management.
4. Obtaining advance approval from their supervisor for each instance of situational/ad-hoc telework.
5. Accurately coding timesheets to reflect the hours teleworked.
6. Teleworking, if they have a telework agreement in place and are required to do so by the supervisor, when the employee is subject to an investigation or other administrative action that requires the employee to be taken out of the workplace.
7. Teleworking when prevented from safely traveling to or performing work at their official worksite due to inclement weather or other emergency condition (e.g. building fire at the official worksite, pandemic) that prevents an employee or group of employees from safely traveling to or safely performing work at an approved location if the telework site is not also impacted. This includes preparing and planning ahead, including taking necessary work equipment (e.g., laptop) to the alternative worksite, when severe weather or other emergency situations can be anticipated.

8. Properly protecting and securing GFE and sensitive information in compliance with Departmental guidance while in transit or while teleworking at an approved alternative worksite.
9. Ensuring the approved alternative worksite is safe, free from hazards, and provides an adequate work environment with regard to connectivity and technology. Employees are expected to provide internet service and other general utility costs at their own expense.
10. Ensuring appropriate arrangements for the care of dependents while teleworking.

6. POLICY. Subject to supervisory discretion and approval, employees may enter into an appropriate telework arrangement. Employee participation is voluntary; however, such arrangements must not diminish employee performance or agency operations, or adversely affect the ability of the Department to achieve its mission.

Employees must work their regularly scheduled tour of duty at their respective duty station unless permitted to telework or are otherwise excused from the requirement to report in-person due to a disability or qualifying medical condition consistent with the procedures outlined in Personnel Bulletin (PB) 21-03, or other compelling reason certified by the Bureau/Office Head and the employee's supervisor consistent with the Acting Secretary's January 24, 2025 Memorandum, *Interior's Compliance with President Trump's Presidential Memorandum Return to In-Person Work and Accompanying OPM Guidance*. An approved telework agreement must be executed to participate in situational/ad-hoc telework. Once all requirements are met, an employee is considered telework-ready.

- A. **Telework Eligibility.** To the extent that mission requirements are not jeopardized, management officials may permit employees who exhibit suitable work performance and conduct, occupy positions suitable for telework, and have access to an appropriate alternative worksite to telework situationally subject to approval by the supervisor for each instance.

Telework eligibility criteria must be applied impartially and consistently and be based on appropriate business and organizational needs. While telework is a work flexibility, it is not an employee entitlement and not all employees are eligible to telework.

The following factors must be evaluated when determining telework eligibility:

1. **Position Suitability.** In determining position suitability, supervisors should consider what duties and functions an employee performs, and not simply the occupation, pay plan, series, or grade level of the position. Positions suitable for telework must have:
 - Quantifiable, project-oriented, or other portable job tasks that can be performed at the approved alternative worksite (e.g., reading reports, analyzing documents and studies, preparing written documents).

- Limited need for access to classified information.
- Off-site access to needed technology.

While many positions may be suitable for telework, there are certain positions that are not conducive to telework.

This policy shall not apply to any employee whose official duties require on a daily basis (every workday):

- a. direct handling of secure materials determined to be inappropriate for telework by management; or
- b. on-site activity that cannot be handled remotely or at an alternative worksite.

When an employee's position is determined not normally suitable for telework, there may be circumstances or portions of the employee's work (e.g., reading and analyzing documents and preparing reports or other types of correspondence, non-classified assignments) that may be considered for telework on a situational basis if the supervisor deems it to be in the best interest of the agency.

2. **Employee Eligibility.** After ensuring that the position is suitable for situational telework, the supervisor must determine the employee's eligibility to telework. To be considered eligible for telework, an employee must demonstrate characteristics indicating their ability to effectively work away from the official worksite. Employees eligible for telework must display dependability, responsibility, and conscientiousness; the ability to work independently and without close supervision; self-motivation and self-discipline; and the ability to prioritize work and manage time wisely.
3. **Employee Ineligibility.** Employees are ineligible for situational telework if:
 - a. Their conduct has resulted in an official disciplinary action taken against them (e.g., written reprimand, suspension, removal, reduction in grade/pay) for any type of misconduct. Disciplined employees may remain ineligible to telework for a maximum of two years from the effective date of the official disciplinary action. When disciplined employees become eligible for telework, supervisors, after consultation with the SHRO, may allow disciplined employees to telework or may continue periods of telework ineligibility until a future date;
 - b. Consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 6502(a)(2), an employee may not telework under this policy if:
 - the employee has been officially disciplined for being absent without permission for more than 5 days in any calendar year; or
 - the employee has been officially disciplined for violations of subpart G of the Standards of Ethical Conduct of Employees of the

Executive Branch for viewing, downloading, or exchanging pornography, including child pornography, on a Federal Government computer or while performing official Federal Government duties.

The period of ineligibility for employees who have been officially disciplined for misconduct indicated in Section 7.A.(3)(b) depends on the type of action and whether a non-permanent or permanent record of the discipline is filed in the employee's electronic official personnel folder (e-OPF). For non-permanent records (e.g., reprimand), the prohibition from telework exists until the document is removed. For permanent records (e.g., personnel actions documenting suspensions), the prohibition would be permanent; or

- c. They have received less than a Fully Successful performance rating at any time during the rating period or been notified in writing of less than Fully Successful performance (e.g., by receipt of a Notice of Opportunity to Demonstrate Acceptable performance). On a case-by-case basis, employees who are formally notified during the performance year that their performance has improved to the Fully Successful level may request situational/ad-hoc telework by submitting a telework agreement to their supervisor for review and approval.

Although the above criteria establishes when an employee is eligible to participate in telework, eligibility does not equate to an entitlement to telework. The determination regarding the suitability of a position, eligibility of an employee to telework, or approval of an employee's participation in telework resides with management and will be based on the duties of the employee's position, business needs, and/or the employee's ability to fulfill their responsibilities as outlined in Section 6. Eligibility criteria may not be less restrictive.

- B. **Establishing a Telework Arrangement.** If it is determined that situational/ad-hoc telework is in the best interest of the agency, the supervisor and the employee must complete the required training and execute a telework agreement before initiating a telework arrangement.

1. **Complete Telework Training.**

- a. Prior to initiating a telework arrangement, employees and their supervisors must complete telework training. The required training courses for supervisors and employees are available via the Department's electronic learning management system. Employees must complete the course titled "*Telework Fundamentals – Employee Training*," and supervisors must complete the course titled, "*Telework Fundamentals – Manager Training*." This is a one-time requirement. Once completed, employees and supervisors do not need to repeat the training for the purposes of telework. If employees or supervisors have documentation demonstrating they completed previous training titled "*Telework 101 for Employees*," or "*Telework 101 for*

Supervisors," or equivalent training, they do not need to complete these courses.

- b. Bureaus/Offices may establish organization-specific telework training to fulfill this requirement.

2. **Complete Telework Agreement.**

- a. An approved Telework Agreement (Form DI-3457) must be in place before an employee is permitted to telework. The telework agreement documents the terms and conditions of the telework arrangement and includes a safety checklist for the employee to use in assessing the overall safety of the alternative worksite. The telework agreement must be completed by the employee and the supervisor. Supervisors should strive to complete the telework agreement form within ten (10) business days of receipt from employee. The final decision regarding the approval of a situational/ad-hoc telework arrangement rests with management.
- b. A new DI-3457 must be completed when an employee is assigned a new supervisor or new position and requests to continue to telework situationally. A new telework agreement form must also be initiated to document any approved changes to an employee's telework arrangement.
- c. Telework agreements must be reviewed by the supervisor and teleworker on an annual basis to be revalidated, revised, or terminated as appropriate. During this annual review and recertification, the supervisor must verify that the employee is still eligible to participate in telework (e.g., review employee's most recent performance rating to ensure that it is at least Fully Successful). The annual review and recertification should occur on or before the one-year anniversary date that the telework agreement was originally approved. Failure to complete the annual recertification requirement may result in the termination of the telework agreement.

3. **Telework Denial and Termination.** Management may deny or terminate a telework agreement at any time. In addition, an employee may voluntarily terminate a telework agreement with proper notice to their supervisor.

- a. **Denial or Termination of Telework Arrangement by Management.** When an employee's request to telework is denied or an agreement is terminated by management, the reasons for denial or termination will be documented in writing on the DI-3457 and a copy provided to the employee. Denial or termination decisions must be based on mission-related reasons and what is in the best interest of the agency (e.g., telework arrangement fails to meet the organization's needs; employee's performance or conduct does not comply with the terms of the telework agreement; employee or their position no longer meets the eligibility criteria; staffing issues lead to inadequate office coverage). For terminations of current agreements, management will strive to

give as much advance notice as reasonably possible.

- b. **Termination of Telework Arrangement by Employee.** Employees may voluntarily terminate their participation in a telework arrangement. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the employee's supervisor.
- c. **Employee Grievance of Telework Denial or Termination.** Employees may grieve the denial of a telework request or the termination of an existing telework agreement.
 - Non-bargaining unit employees may file a grievance in accordance with the Department's Administrative Grievance Procedures.
 - Bargaining unit employees may file a grievance through negotiated grievance procedures, if provided for in their applicable collective bargaining agreement. If there is no collective bargaining agreement and/or negotiated grievance procedures in place, bargaining unit employees may be permitted to file in accordance with the Department's Administrative Grievance Procedures where the use of these procedures has been agreed to via a written agreement between the appropriate management and union representatives.

C. **Equipping for Telework.** Employees who are approved for situational/ad-hoc telework must have the necessary equipment and designated workspace to telework from the approved alternative worksite.

D. **Teleworking from the Approved Alternative Worksite.**

1. **Designated Workspace.** Teleworkers must have a designated workspace that is safe and conducive for the performance of their duties at the approved alternative worksite. At a minimum, an employee must be able to send, receive and respond to electronic mail and communicate via telephone. The employee's communications from the alternative location should be seamless (e.g., customers should not experience an interruption in service delivery from an employee who is teleworking). Management maintains the right to make on-site inspections of the employee's telework site. Such inspections will be by appointment during the teleworker's normal tour of duty and with advance notice of at least 24 hours.
2. **Dependent Care.** Employees cannot personally care for a dependent while teleworking and are responsible for securing appropriate arrangements for any dependents who are unable to care for themselves independently. This does not preclude a teleworker from having a caregiver in the home who provides care to the dependent(s) while the employee teleworks, provided the arrangement does not disrupt the employee's ability to telework effectively. Also, an employee may have a dependent present in the home, provided they do not require constant supervision or care (e.g., older child or adolescent) and their presence does not disrupt the employee's ability to telework effectively.

3. **Costs Associated with Telework at Home.** Work-at-home telework may increase certain costs to the employee. The Department assumes no responsibility for any costs associated with the employee's home residence, including home maintenance, insurance, furniture, utilities, internet access, and telecommunication costs.
 4. **Work-Related Injuries or Illnesses.** Teleworkers may be covered by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act for an on-the-job injury or occupational illness sustained while conducting official Government business at the approved alternative worksite. Employees must inform their immediate supervisor of any on-the-job injury or occupational illness sustained at the approved alternative worksite at the earliest time possible and consistent with Department policy. Accidents and on-the-job injuries must be reported using the Safety Management Information System to enable Bureau/Office Safety Managers to track and report incidents. Teleworkers must also visit the Department of Labor's Employees' Compensation Operations & Management Portal to file a workers' compensation claim with the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.
- E. **Tour of Duty While Teleworking.** Employees who telework must perform official duties at their alternative worksite during their approved, scheduled tour of duty. Work schedules and hours of duty may be changed with the supervisor's approval and in accordance with established Bureau/Office procedures. Telework is compatible with standard and alternative work schedules (e.g., flexible and compressed work schedules).
- F. **Telework During Emergency or Closure Situations.** In the event the official worksite is closed due to an inclement weather event or other emergency condition (e.g., building fire, pandemic), telework-ready employees must telework each regularly scheduled workday during the emergency situation, as instructed. As such, telework-ready employees must prepare to telework when a weather or emergency event is forecasted or anticipated (e.g., a major snowstorm is predicted) by bringing home any necessary equipment (e.g., laptop computer) and work files. To the extent that an employee is unable to telework because they failed to make necessary preparations for reasonably anticipated conditions, the employee must use appropriate paid leave, paid time off, or leave without pay. In the event the employee is prevented from safely teleworking from the approved alternative worksite due to conditions related to the emergency (e.g., weather-related damage that makes occupying the employee's home telework site unsafe, loss of electrical power or internet service, evacuation by local authorities), the supervisor may, at their discretion, grant weather and safety leave consistent with Departmental policy.
1. **Unscheduled Telework Operating Status Announcements.** When OPM, a local Federal Executive Board, or DOI local operating unit head announces that employees have the option for unscheduled telework or unscheduled leave, situationally telework-ready employees may telework from their approved alternative worksite. When the option is announced, an employee must have an approved situational/ad-hoc telework agreement on record and notify their supervisor of the intent to telework. Employees who are approved to perform

unscheduled telework must have the necessary equipment and have a sufficient amount of work to complete in order to telework from the approved alternative worksite. If the employee does not have enough work, they must report to the official worksite or request appropriate unscheduled leave to account for hours not worked.

2. **Dependent Care Arrangements During Weather or Emergency Events.** As provided for in Section 7.D(2), employees cannot personally care for a dependent while teleworking and are responsible for securing appropriate arrangements for any dependents who are unable to care for themselves. If a teleworker cannot arrange for appropriate dependent care because of the weather or emergency event affecting the official worksite, any time spent providing personal care to dependents cannot be considered hours of work. The employee is expected to accurately account for work and non-work hours during their tour of duty and to take the appropriate leave (paid or unpaid) to account for any time spent away from normal work-related duties during their scheduled tour of duty.

G. **Continuity of Operations Plans.** Consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 6504(d), during any period that the Department is operating under a COOP plan, that plan shall supersede the Departmental Telework Policy.

H. **Reasonable Accommodation.** Consistent with applicable laws and Departmental policy, employees may request telework in connection with requests for reasonable accommodation. Managers and supervisors who receive such requests or become aware that an employee may need reasonable accommodation, should follow the procedures outlined in PB 21-03, *Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities*. Consistent with the Acting Secretary's January 24, 2025, Memorandum, *Interior's Compliance with President Trump's Presidential Memorandum Return to In-Person Work and Accompanying OPM Guidance*, reasonable accommodations that include telework arrangements will require approval by second-level management officials.

7. LABOR MANAGEMENT OBLIGATIONS. Bureaus/Offices are reminded to fulfill their labor-management obligations, as appropriate, in implementing the requirements set forth in this PB.

8. INQUIRIES. Any Department employee or employee representative seeking further information concerning this policy may contact their Bureau/Office Telework Coordinator and/or SHRO. Bureau/Office Telework Coordinators and SHRO's may contact the Department's Office of Human Capital concerning questions related to this policy.

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