These questions and answers accompany the revised telework program policy for the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department or DOI), which is effective on July 15, 2019. Personnel Bulletin (PB) 19-02 establishes the Departmental policy under which eligible employees may be authorized to telework.

To review the new telework program policy and other related resources, please visit the Department’s telework resources pages available at https://www.doi.gov/telework or on the Human Capital Crossroads intranet site.

If you have any additional questions, please contact your Bureau/Office Telework Coordinator.

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1. Why is the Department changing its telework program policy?

Well-implemented and established telework programs provide agencies with a valuable tool to meet mission objectives while helping employees enhance work-life balance. The Department recognizes the value of telework and in 2012 established a policy under which eligible employees could participate in teleworking to the maximum extent practical, while maintaining productive employee and organizational performance.

DOI will continue to support and promote telework, but much has changed since 2012 when the policy was adopted, necessitating an update to modernize our practices. Accordingly, DOI has revised the Departmental telework program policy via PB 19-02 to bring better clarity, transparency and organization to the program.

2. What are the key changes to the Departmental telework program policy?

The new telework program policy:

- Clarifies that an employee's participation in the DOI telework program (i.e., entering into a telework agreement) is voluntary and that telework must only be approved when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the agency.
- Requires that teleworkers physically report to the regular work site at least two full work days per bi-weekly pay period, except for rare short-term circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. These days can be any two days during the pay period as approved by the supervisor.
- Establishes that telework arrangements available within the agency can be either core or situational.
- Requires that core telework agreements (i.e., telework on a recurring, scheduled basis—fixed day(s) per week or pay period) also be reviewed and approved by a higher level management official.
- Establishes that employees in supervisory positions may only be considered for situational telework arrangements. Given the value and importance of their interpersonal interactions with staff, supervisory positions are not suitable for core telework arrangements.
- Requires annual review and recertification of telework agreements to validate that the arrangements are still effective and in the best interest of the agency.
- Clarifies that new telework agreements must be initiated when a new supervisor has been assigned and/or an employee is reassigned to a different position.
- Requires that telework-ready employees (i.e., those with approved agreements in place) telework when the official worksite is closed due to an inclement weather event or other emergency condition (e.g., building fire).
- Establishes responsibilities for Bureau Directors/Office Heads to ensure organizations comply with telework policy requirements and to hold supervisors accountable for implementing telework in accordance with the Departmental policy.
• Clarifies that the period of telework ineligibility for the two bases provided for in the Telework Enhancement Act (i.e., employees who have been officially disciplined for being absent without permission for more than five days in any calendar year or for reviewing/downloading/exchanging pornography on a federal computer or while performing federal duties) depends on the type of disciplinary action issued and that the period of ineligibility may be permanent.
• Clarifies expectations regarding dependent care while teleworking.
• Establishes definitions for mobile work and remote work and clarifies that these work arrangements are not considered telework and are not covered by the Departmental telework program policy.
• Requires Bureaus/Offices to forward any supplemental telework implementing procedures to the Department’s Office of Human Capital for concurrence prior to implementation.

With the issuance of the PB 19-02, the Department has automated the telework agreement form (Form DI-3457), which will provide real-time data for management regarding the numbers and types of current telework agreements.

3. When are these changes effective?

The new policy changes are effective July 15, 2019.

4. I currently have an approved telework agreement in place. Will I need to complete a new agreement as a result of these policy changes?

Yes. Due to the changes in the Departmental telework program policy, the telework agreement (Form DI-3457) has been updated to reflect the new policy requirements (e.g., concurring management official approval of core telework agreements, requirement to telework during weather-related or other emergency closure situations). Accordingly, employees with current telework agreements in place, who wish to continue teleworking, will need to initiate a new telework agreement under the new policy by November 12, 2019.

**Telework Program Policy: General Information**

5. What is telework?

The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 defines telework as a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of his or her 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 an

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1 The Department will not be issuing a Departmental remote work policy at this time.
employee to perform work, during any part of regular, paid hours, at an approved alternative worksite (e.g. home, telework center, other approved worksite).

Telework arrangements can benefit the agency and the workforce in several ways: enhance the recruitment and retention of a high-quality, diverse workforce; assist in providing reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities; ensure the continuity of operations in an emergency; reduce transportation-related costs; improve morale by allowing employees to balance work and personal demands; and facilitate employee productivity toward mission accomplishment.

6. **What is a “telework-ready” employee?**

A telework-ready employee is 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 his or her duties at an approved alternative worksite.

7. **What are the types of telework arrangements available?**

There are two types of telework arrangements at DOI: 1) Core Telework and 2) Situational Telework.

Core telework is an arrangement in which eligible employees telework from an approved alternative worksite on a recurring, scheduled basis—i.e., fixed day(s) per week or pay period. For example, a teleworker who has an approved telework arrangement wherein he or she teleworks every Wednesday would be considered a core teleworker. The core telework schedule must be documented on the telework agreement and approved by the supervisor and concurring management official.

Situational telework is an arrangement in which eligible employees telework without a set schedule. Examples of situational telework include telework as a result of inclement weather, personal appointment, and special work assignment. An employee with an approved situational telework arrangement must obtain advance approval from his or her supervisor for each instance of telework.

Regardless of the type of telework arrangement, an approved telework agreement must in place in order for an employee to telework. Employees are encouraged to work with their supervisors to determine the most effective telework arrangement. The final decision regarding the type of telework arrangement and days an employee is scheduled to telework rests with management.

8. **Does an employee have a right to telework?**
No. Telework is not a universal employee benefit or an employee right. Federal law requires agencies to establish telework programs but does not give individual employees a legal right to telework.

9. Can an employee be required to telework?

No. The Telework Enhancement Act does not mandate telework—employee participation (i.e., entering into a telework agreement) is voluntary. Accordingly, an employee cannot be made to enter into a telework agreement even if the duties of the position are suitable for telework and the employee is determined eligible to telework. While entering into a telework arrangement is voluntary, once the employee has an approved telework agreement in place, the agency can require the employee to telework in certain situations (e.g., during an inclement weather-related office closure; if the employee is subject to an investigation or other administrative action that requires he or she to be taken out of workplace).

10. Teleworkers are now required to physically report to the official duty station at least two full work days per bi-weekly period, except for rare, short-term circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. What is an example of a rare, short-term circumstance that would exempt a teleworker from reporting to the official duty station two full work days per pay period?

The temporary exception should generally be used only in cases where (1) the employee is expected to stop teleworking and return to work at the official duty station in the near future, or (2) the employee is expected to continue teleworking but will be able to report to the official duty station at least twice each biweekly pay period on a regular and recurring basis in the near future. Examples of appropriate temporary situations include:

- Recovery from an injury or medical condition;
- Emergency situations preventing an employee from regularly commuting to the official worksite, such as a severe weather emergency or a pandemic health crisis. (For instance, in the aftermath of a hurricane or flood, an employee may be forced to temporarily relocate, making commuting to the regular worksite twice each biweekly pay period on a regular and recurring basis impossible. If the employee is approved to telework, a temporary exception to the twice-a-pay-period requirement would be appropriate.); or
- An extended period of approved absence from work (e.g. paid leave) during which the employee teleworks periodically.

11. What is a concurring management official?

A concurring management official is a new role created with the revised Departmental telework program policy and is defined as the management official within the Bureau/Office with the responsibility to provide second-level review and approval of employee requests for core telework arrangements. In addition to the supervisor, core telework arrangements must now
also be reviewed and approved by the concurring management official. Generally, the concurring management official will be an employee’s second-level supervisor. However, Bureaus/Offices, in their implementing procedures, may assign this responsibility to a higher-level management position consistent with organizational business needs.

**Telework Eligibility**

12. **Who determines if a position is suitable for telework or the eligibility of an employee 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, the agency’s business needs, and the employee’s ability to fulfill his or her responsibilities as a teleworker.

13. **What types of positions are suitable for telework?**

The suitability of a position for telework depends on the duties and functions of the position. Positions suitable for telework must have quantifiable, project-oriented, or other portable job tasks that can be performed satisfactorily at the approved alternative worksite (e.g., reading reports, analyzing documents and studies, preparing written documents); limited need for access to classified information; and off-site access to needed technology.

Positions **not suitable** for telework are those that require on a daily basis (every work day):

- Direct handling of classified or other secure materials determined to be inappropriate for telework by management; or
- On-site activity that cannot be handled remotely or at an alternative worksite (e.g., face-to-face personal contacts; intake or distribution of mail; hands-on contact with machinery, equipment, or vehicles; law enforcement).

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.

14. **Are supervisory positions suitable for telework?**

Given the frequent interpersonal interactions generally required (e.g., coaching/developing staff, managing employee performance (including poor performers), collaborating with leadership teams on urgent matters), supervisory positions are not suitable for core telework.
arrangements. However, supervisory positions may be considered for situational telework if deemed in the best interest of the agency.

15. How does the Department define supervisory positions?

Consistent with the definition in 5 USC 7103(a)(1), a supervisor is defined as an employee having authority "to hire, direct, assign, promote, reward, transfer, furlough, layoff, recall, suspend, discipline, or remove employees, to adjust their grievances, or to effectively recommend such action, if the exercise of the authority is not merely routine or clerical in nature but requires the consistent exercise of independent judgment..." for the purposes of the Departmental telework program policy.

16. My position has been determined suitable for telework. Does that mean I am automatically eligible for telework?

Not necessarily. Once a position is determined suitable for telework, the supervisor must determine the employee's eligibility to telework. To be considered eligible for telework, an employee must demonstrate characteristics indicating his or her 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.

17. Are there circumstances under which an employee must be determined ineligible to telework on a permanent basis?

The Telework Enhancement Act identifies two categories of employees who are not eligible to telework: an employee who has been officially disciplined for being **absent without permission (AWOL) for more than five days** in any calendar year; and an employee who has been officially disciplined for violations of subpart G of the Standards of Ethical Conduct of Employees of the Executive Branch **for reviewing, downloading or exchanging pornography, including child pornography, on a Federal computer or while performing Federal Government duties**.

The period of ineligibility for employees who have been officially disciplined for the type of misconduct above depends on the type of action taken and whether a non-permanent or permanent record of the discipline is filed in the employee’s electronic official personnel folder (eOPF). 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 is permanent.

18. What other circumstances make an employee ineligible to telework?

In addition to the circumstances listed in Question 17, employees are ineligible to telework if:
• 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 servicing Human Resources Office, may allow disciplined employees to telework or may continue periods of telework ineligibility until a future date.
• 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 resume teleworking, if the supervisor deems telework to be in the best interest of the agency.

19. If an employee’s position is determined to be suitable for telework and the employee is eligible to participate, can the employee be required to telework even though he or she has indicated a desire not to telework?

No. An employee's "eligibility" for telework does not create a right or obligation for an employee to "participate" in telework. The fact that an employee may be deemed "eligible" does not mean that the employee can be required to "participate" because telework is a voluntary workplace flexibility. In other words, an agency may not mandate an employee to telework, even if the duties of the position make that employee "telework eligible." Keep in mind that although entering into a telework arrangement is voluntary, once the employee has an approved telework agreement in place, the agency can require the employee to telework in certain situations (e.g., if the employee is subject to an investigation or other administrative action that requires he or she to be taken out of workplace; during an inclement weather-related office closure).

Establishing a Telework Arrangement

20. What is required for an employee to begin teleworking?

If it is determined that telework is a viable option and 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. The required training courses for supervisors and employees are available via the Department’s electronic learning management system, DOITalent:

• For employees: “Telework Fundamentals – Employee Training”
• For supervisors: “Telework Fundamentals – Manager Training”
Once the required training is completed, a telework agreement (Form DI-3457) must be completed by the supervisor and employee before the employee can be permitted to telework. The telework agreement documents the terms and conditions of the telework arrangement, including the type of telework arrangement approved and the particular days for which the employee is approved to telework, if applicable, and includes a safety checklist for the employee to use in assessing the overall safety of the alternative worksite. For core telework arrangements, the telework agreement must also be reviewed and approved by a concurring management official. The final decision regarding the type of telework arrangement and days an employee is scheduled to telework rests with management.

21. Am I required to complete the “Telework Fundamentals” training annually?

No, completion of the telework training 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.

22. I have been assigned a new supervisor. Does my new supervisor have to honor my current telework agreement?

No. Consistent with Departmental policy, a new telework agreement form must be initiated when an employee is assigned a new supervisor or a new position. The determination regarding the approval of a telework arrangement rests with management. Existing telework agreements may be subject to change based on the new supervisor’s assessment of the employee’s eligibility to telework and/or the suitability of the employee’s position for telework.

23. If a supervisor denies an employee’s telework agreement, can the employee appeal that decision?

Yes. Employees may appeal the denial of telework or the termination of an existing telework agreement via applicable grievance procedures.

24. Once approved, does a telework agreement need to be reviewed periodically?

Yes. Consistent with the Departmental telework program policy, telework agreements must be reviewed by the supervisor, concurring management official, if applicable, 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 is at least Fully Successful). The annual review and recertification must occur on or before the one-year anniversary date that the telework agreement was originally approved. Failure to complete the annual recertification requirement will result in the termination of the telework agreement.
25. Under the new policy, employees are required to report to the official duty station at least two times a pay period. If an employee reports to the official duty station for two hours and teleworks the rest of the work day, does that comply with this requirement?

No. The Departmental telework program policy establishes the requirement that an employee approved to telework must physically report to his or her official duty station at least two full work days per bi-weekly pay period, except for rare short-term circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. In other words, the expectation is that the employee will be physically present at the official duty station for a complete tour of duty at least two days per pay period.

26. Are teleworkers also eligible for an alternative work schedule?

Yes, telework is compatible with standard and alternative work schedules (e.g., flexible and compressed work schedules). Bureaus/Offices may not establish implementing procedures that prohibit a teleworker from having an alternative work schedule.

27. Is an employee entitled to an “in lieu of telework day” if the employee is required to report to the official duty station on his or her scheduled telework day?

If a supervisor requires a teleworker to report to the employee’s official worksite on a scheduled telework day, the supervisor may approve the employee’s request to switch his or her scheduled telework day to a different day during that pay period—however, the supervisor is not obligated to do so.

28. Does having a dependent in the home while teleworking violate the telework program policy?

Not necessarily. While telework is not a substitute for dependent care, it can be a very valuable flexibility to employees with caregiving responsibilities. While the presence of dependents in the home is not an absolute bar to teleworking, employees cannot engage in dependent care activities while performing official work duties 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, a dependent may be permitted in the home, provided he or she does not require constant supervision or care (e.g., older child or adolescent) and his or her presence does not disrupt the employee’s ability to telework effectively.
29. An employee is currently on a core telework agreement that allows her to telework each Monday. She has recently been assigned a project and would like to telework a few extra days this week. Does she need to submit a new telework agreement?

No, however, requests by the employee to change his or her scheduled telework day(s) in a particular week or biweekly pay period must be submitted in advance and approved by the supervisor. A permanent change in the telework arrangement requires a new telework agreement to be executed.

30. How should I code my hours of telework on my timesheet?

Provided below are the telework indicator codes to use when recording hours of telework on one’s timesheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telework Indicator Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For Core Telework, the following codes should be used when:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - Frequent Regular Telework Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B - Frequent Regular Alternate Telework Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - Frequent Regular Employee Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - Regular Telework Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E - Regular Alternate Telework Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F - Regular Employee Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **For Situational Telework, the following codes should be used when:** |
| G - Periodic Telework Center | Employee teleworks from established telework center on a situational basis with supervisor approval. |
| H - Periodic Alternate Telework Center | Employee teleworks from a work site other than an established telework center on a situational basis with supervisor approval. |
| I - Periodic Employee Home | Employee teleworks from home on a situational basis with supervisor approval. |
Telework During Emergency or Closure Situations

31. If Federal offices are closed due to inclement weather or some other emergency, are teleworkers excused from work as well?

No. In the event the official worksite is closed due to an inclement weather event or other emergency condition (e.g., building fire), telework-ready employees must telework each regularly scheduled work day during the emergency situation. 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 he or she 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 his or her discretion, grant weather and safety leave consistent with Departmental policy.

32. Can teleworkers be granted weather and safety leave?

Employees with an approved telework agreement (i.e., “telework-ready employees”) who are able to safely travel to and work at an approved telework site cannot be granted weather and safety leave. Telework-ready employees must telework, take other leave (paid or unpaid) or paid time off, unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- **Unexpected event.** A telework-ready employee may be granted weather and safety leave, if in the judgement of the supervisor, the employee could not have reasonably anticipated the severe weather or emergency condition and therefore did not take home needed equipment or work. (For example, the weather forecast changes dramatically during the weekend so an employee cannot reasonably be expected to have known that they would need to telework on Monday.)

- **Unsafe telework site.** A telework-ready employee who is prevented from safely working at the telework site as a result of the severe weather or emergency event (e.g., flooding at the telework site) may be granted weather and safety leave.

However, if the conditions do not prevent the employee from safely traveling to or safely performing work at the official worksite, even if the affected day is a scheduled telework day, the employee cannot be granted weather and safety leave.
33. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued an early departure announcement due to inclement weather. In this case, is the expectation that anyone with an approved telework agreement will leave the office, go home, and telework for the remainder of the workday?

Employees with an approved telework agreement working in the office when an early departure is announced generally may receive weather and safety leave only for the period it takes to commute home. Once they arrive home, these employees are expected to complete the remaining time in their workday by teleworking or taking appropriate paid leave, paid time off, or leave without pay, unless the employee is prevented from safely working at home due to circumstances arising from the event that necessitated the early dismissal. If this is the case, the supervisor may, at his or her discretion, grant weather and safety leave for the remainder of the work day consistent with Departmental policy.

Employees who were already teleworking when an early departure announcement is made are expected to continue to telework for the remainder of the work day.

34. The regular worksite is closed due to inclement weather. An employee is unable to transport his three-year old to daycare and the child is at home. May the employee telework?

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 teleworkers 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 his or her tour of duty and to take their own appropriate leave (paid or unpaid) to account for any time spent away from normal work-related duties during his or her scheduled tour of duty. Weather and safety leave may not be granted for this purpose.

Supervising a Teleworker

35. Can I require employees who telework to document their work assignments when working from the telework site?

Performance standards and management expectations for teleworking employees must be the same as the performance standards for non-teleworking employees. Like non-teleworking employees, teleworkers are held accountable for the results they produce. The Telework Enhancement Act contains specific language that clearly states teleworkers and non-teleworkers are to be treated the same for purposes of:

- Periodic appraisals of job performance;
• Training, rewarding, reassigning, promoting, reducing in grade, retaining and removing employees;
• Work requirements; or
• Other acts involving managerial discretion.

36. Can a supervisor deny a request to telework or terminate an existing telework agreement?

Yes. Telework is not a universal employee benefit or an employee right. Accordingly, management may deny an employee’s request to telework or terminate an existing telework agreement. Decisions to deny or terminate a telework agreement must be based on mission-related reasons and what is in the best interest of the agency (e.g., telework arrangement fails to meet organizational needs; employee’s performance does not comply with terms of telework agreement; staffing issues lead to inadequate office coverage)—and not for personal reasons. The rationale for the denial or termination will be documented in writing on the telework agreement form (Form DI-3457) and provided to the employee.

37. What does teleworking offer me, the supervisor?

A successful telework program can improve organizational efficiency, raise the quality and quantity of work, boost employee morale and job satisfaction, and lower your employee turnover rate. In addition, the greater communication challenges that a telework program presents can further develop your own skills as a supervisor.

38. Do I have to manage a teleworker differently than the non-teleworkers on my staff?

No. It is important to note that performance standards for teleworking employees must be the same as performance standards for non-teleworking employees. Management expectations for performance should be clearly addressed in the employee’s performance plan, and the performance plan should be reviewed to ensure the standards do not create inequities or inconsistencies between teleworking and non-teleworking employees. Like non-teleworking employees, teleworkers are held accountable for the results they produce. Each employee should be appraised against his or her performance standards, independent of their location.

39. How will I know my employees are available when I need them?

The telework agreement provides the framework for the discussion that needs to take place between the supervisor and the employee about expectations. Supervisors are responsible for establishing and communicating clear expectations regarding the telework arrangement to include methods of communication (e.g., customer service time frames for returning phone calls, email communication), meeting attendance, duty hours, and procedures for requesting leave while teleworking. For all types of telework, this discussion is important to ensure that employees understand the supervisor’s expectations concerning maintaining communication with the office and what will be done to meet contingencies. If the teleworker’s presence is
needed in the office, he or she may be required to report to the office on a scheduled telework day.

40. How does a supervisor ensure the alternative work location for a teleworker is safe, and how is a claim for injury handled?

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure the alternative worksite is a safe, hazard-free work environment conducive for the performance of one's official duties. The telework agreement (Form DI-3457), which must be in place before an employee can telework, includes a safety checklist for employee use to certify the overall safety of the alternative worksite. In addition, 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.

Employees injured or suffering from work-related illnesses while conducting official Government business at the approved alternative worksite are covered by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (workers' compensation), as appropriate. Employees must inform their immediate supervisor of any on-the-job injury or occupational illness sustained at the approved alternative worksite as soon as possible. Supervisors should immediately investigate any reports of accidents or injuries on the job.

41. An employee who is eligible to telework has indicated that she does not wish to telework. Is the supervisor required to document the employee's decision?

No. As telework is a voluntary workplace flexibility, an employee may elect not to enter into a telework agreement even if he or she is eligible to telework and occupies a position suitable for telework. Accordingly, the Departmental telework program policy does not require an employee to document his or her wish not to telework.

Other Workplace Flexibilities That Are Not Telework

42. What is “Mobile Work”?

Mobile work is work that is characterized by routine and regular travel to conduct work in customer or other worksites as opposed to a single authorized alternative worksite. Examples of mobile work include site audits, site inspections, investigations, property management, and work performed while commuting, traveling between worksites, or on Temporary Duty (TDY). This category of work is not considered telework and is not covered by the Departmental telework program policy.

43. What is “Remote Work”?
Remote work, sometimes called “virtual work,” is an arrangement in which an employee permanently performs duties from a geographic location which is different from that of the employing office, e.g., from another state. A remote worker permanently performs work from a non-DOI owned/leased worksite, such as his or her home, in a geographic location that is different from the regular worksite. For a remote worker, the approved remote worksite (i.e., non-DOI owned/leased worksite) is the employee’s official duty station for pay purposes, even if that location is his or her home. This category of work is not considered telework and is not covered by the Departmental telework program policy.

For remote work arrangements within the Department, there is no expectation that the employee report to the employing office twice in a bi-weekly pay period because he or she works from a geographic location beyond the commuting area. Remote work arrangements create certain pay entitlements (e.g., reimbursement of employee travel to the regular worksite) and should only be permitted when there is a clear benefit to the agency.

44. What is the difference between telework and remote work?

The key difference between a telework and remote work arrangement is how the official duty station is determined for the employee. For a teleworker, the official duty station is the regular worksite—the DOI owned/leased worksite where the employee must physically report at least two full work days per bi-weekly pay period. For a remote worker, the approved remote worksite (i.e., non-DOI owned/leased worksite) is the employee’s official duty station. This distinction is important because a remote worker receives locality pay and other entitlements based on the approved remote worksite.

45. For the purposes of remote work, how is the “commuting area” determined?

Commuting area means the geographic area surrounding a DOI owned/leased worksite that encompasses the localities where people live and reasonably can be expected to travel back and forth daily to work, as established by the employing agency based on the generally held expectations of the local community. When an employee’s residence is within the standard commuting area for a work site, the work site is within the employee's commuting area (5 CFR § 550.703). When determining the “localities where people live and reasonably can be expected to travel back and forth daily to work,” Bureaus/Offices may consider factors such as: commuting time, traffic congestion, weather, competitive areas, travel distance, and availability of public transit (e.g., commuter buses, training, subways, carpools).

46. Are remote work arrangements possible within the commuting area of the employing office?

No. By definition, remote work is an arrangement in which the employee performs work from outside the commuting area of the employing office. Employees who wish to work from an approved alternative worksite within the commuting area of their employing office are teleworkers. They are subject to the requirement to report to the regular worksite twice per bi-weekly pay period, except for
certain temporary situations outlined in PB 19-02 (e.g., to accommodate a medical need). Their official duty station remains the regular worksite.

47. I am interested in requesting a remote work arrangement. What are the parameters and requirements for remote work?

Employees interested in a remote work arrangement should discuss with their supervisor and contact their servicing Human Resources Office for the Bureau/Office policies governing this work arrangement.

48. An employee is moving out of his commuting area and wants to work from his new residence. Would this arrangement be considered remote work or telework?

This arrangement, in which the employee would be permanently performing duties from a non-DOI owned/leased worksite in a geographic location that is different from the regular worksite, would be considered remote work—not telework. Thus, the employee would not be subject to PB 19-02’s requirement to physically report to the regular worksite at least two full work days per bi-weekly pay period. Bureaus/Offices allowing such an arrangement must officially change the employee’s official duty station to his or her residence in the new geographic area.

If you have any additional questions, please contact your Bureau/Office Telework Coordinator.