

COVID-19 Update: Managing Employees Working Remotely

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During this national pandemic, more employees than ever have been working remotely. Even as businesses start to re-open their workplaces, a large percentage of the workforce will continue to work remotely, full-time, part time or on an intermittent schedule. For this reason, it is important that all employers have a telework policy that establishes clear guidelines setting forth the Company's expectations, procedures and protocols.

While allowing employees to continue to work remotely will enable companies to continue their operations, there are many important issues that employers should consider. We prepared the following guidelines to help employers manage their employees working remotely.

Importance of Communication

While employees are working remotely, it is advisable for employers to establish a regular method of communicating with their employees to keep them engaged and productive. Employers should send email updates to their employees regarding the status of Company operations. This is especially important as employers begin to prepare for employees to return to the workplace in the weeks and months ahead.

We also recommend that management hold weekly staff meetings via telephone conference or video conferencing with their departments. Maintaining an open line of communication will help to ensure that work is being completed properly and timely. These group discussions will also facilitate strategic planning and provide a forum for employees to ask questions and seek guidance to maintain a high level of performance.

Employers should encourage employees to immediately notify their supervisor or human resources department if they require additional training, equipment or supplies to complete their tasks remotely. Similarly, employees should be instructed to immediately contact human resources if anything arises that interferes with and/or prohibits them from being able to work remotely. Employees that are unable to work or telework for a COVID-19 related reason, may be entitled to certain benefits under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act or other laws](#).

Clear Expectations

As many employees are working remotely for the first time, employers need to take appropriate steps to ensure all employees have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the Company's expectations. This may be accomplished by redistributing job descriptions, updating job descriptions, and/or preparing a new list of expectations while the employee is working

remotely. Taking the time to define, in detail, the tasks you expect an employee to complete, will significantly improve productivity and help employers hold employees accountable. Employers may also request employees keep a daily or weekly log of their tasks.

Recording Hours Worked

Wage and hour regulations require employers to maintain a daily record of all hours worked by most employees. This is especially important for employees that are paid hourly or are otherwise nonexempt and eligible for the payment of overtime for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Employers may need to establish a new protocol for monitoring the hours worked by employees, including requiring employees to record their start time, their breaks (including meals), and end time.

In addition, hourly and nonexempt employees should be reminded that they are prohibited from performing work of any kind before or after their assigned hours of work, this includes reading and sending emails. To minimize the impact of employees working overtime, employers may also want to require that all employees obtain prior written approval from their supervisor before working any additional hours.

We are available to help employers develop policies and procedures to monitor employees working remotely.