



ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

TELECOMMUTING

FESSAM # 9C.3

Effective 1-1-2016

I. POLICY:

Loveland Fire Rescue Authority (LFRA) supports telecommuting as a work alternative that employees may participate in when it would benefit both the organization and the employee.

Telecommuting is working at a location other than the conventional work place. Telecommuting involves moving work to the worker instead of moving workers to work. Employees who work out of their home two or three days a week constitute the most common telecommuting arrangement. While the term itself suggests computer use, the telephone can provide the only link to the office for many telecommuters.

Not all people are suitable for telecommuting. For telecommuting to be a workable alternative, the employee and supervisor must have excellent communication with each other, have a high level of trust, and be flexible.

Not all jobs are suitable for telecommuting. Employees whose jobs require face-to-face contact with citizens or other customers would be unsuccessful at telecommuting. Those jobs that require a significant amount of reading, planning and research, are generally ideal for telecommuting. Some employees home environment may not be conducive to work either. Careful selection of employees, special training and a specific work agreement help assure a successful telecommuting program.

Telecommuting is not a formal, universal employee benefit but an alternative method of meeting the needs of LFRA. Since telecommuting is a privilege, the organization has the right to refuse to make telecommuting available to an employee and to terminate a telecommuting arrangement at any time.

Fire Chief or his/her designees will determine which jobs and people are appropriate for telecommuting.

Employees are not required to telecommute. Employees have the right to refuse to telecommute if the option is made available to them. Employees who do choose to telecommute have the right to cease telecommuting and return to their former in-office work pattern at anytime.

Employee salary, benefits and insurance coverage will not change due to participation in the telecommuting program. Only the work location will change on certain days.

The amount of time the employee is expected to work per day or per pay period will not change due to participation in the telecommuting program. A Telecommuting Agreement will be developed by the employee and his or her supervisor outlining the days for telecommuting and the work to be performed during those days. Any changes to the agreed upon work plan will be reviewed and approved by the supervisor in advance.

Since the employee's home work space will be considered an extension of their office work space, liability to LFRA for job-related accidents may continue to exist during the approved work schedule and in the employee's designated work location. To ensure that safe working conditions exist, the supervisor will have the right to make on-site inspections at mutually agreed upon times. The



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organization assumes no liability for injuries occurring in the employee's home work space outside the agreed-upon work hours.

Telecommuters will maintain safe conditions in the home work space, and will practice the same safety habits while telecommuting as he or she would in the office environment. In the case of injury while working at home, the employee will immediately report the injury to his or her supervisor and to Risk Management.

While telecommuting, employees will be reachable via telephone during agreed upon work hours. Telecommuters will notify the office if they leave their telecommuting location, just as they would inform the receptionist or someone else when leaving the traditional office during the work day.

The employee will not undertake to provide continuous primary care for a child during at-home working hours. If such children will be in the home during the employee's at-home working hours, some other individual must be present to provide primary care for those children.

The employee will also not undertake to provide continuous primary care for an elderly adult while working at home. Employees are responsible for informing the supervisor of any unusual situations that could occur requiring care of anyone in the home during telecommuting hours.

Major equipment purchases, such as PC's, modems, fax machines, xerox machines and additional telephone lines, are expenses that may be incurred by the employee or by LFRA if funds are available. Employees are responsible for properly caring for all LFRA owned equipment.

LFRA is not responsible for the repair and maintenance for employee-owned equipment. If equipment fails at anytime, the employee has a choice of either taking vacation time or coming into work.

Restricted-access materials will not be taken out of the office unless approved in advance by the supervisor.

Telecommuting that requires PC connectivity should be reviewed with the City of Loveland Information Technology Department to ensure the telecommuting employee orders the proper equipment.

To insure hardware and software security, and data integrity, all software used for telecommuting must be virus inspected and each PC must have virus protection software installed.

Any software must be used in accordance with the license agreement provided in the software documentation. Please see the AR referring to software piracy.

Office supplies will be provided by LFRA and should be obtained during the telecommuter's in-office work period. Out-of-pocket expenses for supplies normally available in the office will not be reimbursed.

All Administrative Regulations apply to telecommuting employees.



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II. PROCEDURE:

If an employee and the Fire Chief or his/her designee have a desire to explore telecommuting, the first step is to determine if the job and the person are a good fit. Available from the Human Resources Department is information that will help the Fire Chief or his/her designee decide including:

- * characteristics found in the ideal telecommuter and telemanager
- * benefits of telecommuting for the employee and the organization
- * challenges of telecommuting
- * a "Telecommuting Profile" (analysis of job suitability)
- * an "Employee Suitability for Telecommuting" (analysis of employee suitability)
- * common questions regarding telecommuting
- * telecommuting
- * workplace design

If the Fire Chief or his/her designee decides that telecommuting is an option, the employee and Fire Chief or his/her designee (and any appropriate supervisors) will review the policy and jointly develop the Telecommuting Agreement, also available in the City of Loveland Human Resources Department. After implementation of the program, the Fire Chief/Supervisors and employee will periodically monitor the degree of success of the telecommuting.

LFRA FIRE CHIEF SIGNATURE:



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CHARACTERISTICS FOUND IN IDEAL TELECOMMUTERS AND TELEMANAGERS

The ideal telecommuter usually:

- is self-motivated
- has a positive attitude toward telecommuting
- is well organized
- has a high level of productivity
- requires minimal supervision
- prefers the home environment for at least some of the week
- is comfortable with the idea of working alone
- has a high degree of job knowledge and skill and
- has strong time-management skills

The ideal telemanager:

- has a positive attitude toward telecommuting
- is willing to let his or her employees telecommute
- has strong communication skills
- manages by results and not by monitoring work hours
- delegates work easily
- is well-organized and
- is open to new ideas

BENEFITS OF TELECOMMUTING FOR EMPLOYEES

Most employees regard telecommuting as a major benefit. The following are some of its selling points.

Steering clear of traffic. By working at home, or closer to home, employees avoid driving time and frustration with traffic.

Increasing flexibility. Employees have greater flexibility to choose their own hours.

Work environment. Employees are free to establish a working environment that is most conducive to maximizing productivity.

Saving money. Telecommuters can save hundreds of dollars on gas, car maintenance and depreciation by not driving to work every day. They're also likely to spend less on work attire and lunches.

Getting...and staying...on the job. Telecommuting may be the only means of acquiring a



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job for the mobility-limited or physically-impaired. Pregnant employees may be able to continue working longer and return to work sooner if they can telecommute.

Easing child care problems. Telecommuting can make it easier for working parents to manage child care arrangements. It is not, however, a substitute for child care. A parent cannot work and care for a child at the same time. Generally, this causes both jobs to suffer. However, a parent could hire a baby sitter to attend to a child's needs while he or she works. Also, by eliminating the time spent traveling to the office, telecommuters may no longer need child care for school-age children. For example, a parent working at home could start working at 6 a.m. while the other parent got the children off to school, and then could be finished with his or her work by the time the children got home.

BENEFITS TO TELECOMMUTING FOR LFRA

Reducing Traffic

Telecommuting significantly helps the environment by reducing traffic congestion and helping to solve air quality problems.

Productivity

The State of Arizona, after completing a two-year telecommuting pilot, conducted a survey with telecommuters and telemanagers. The study concluded that:

- employees' productivity rose 15 to 25 percent
- quality and quantity of work produced was higher when working at home than when working at the office
- there were fewer distractions at home than at the office
- there was more continuous work time
- employees can work at personal "peak" times instead of a standard "eight to five" schedule.

Reducing Absenteeism

Job stress is a reality which can affect an employee's health. Telecommuting can reduce illness caused by stress. It also reduces the conflict between personal responsibility and work responsibilities. In the case of personal emergencies, a telecommuter can take care of the problem and spend the rest of the day working instead of having to use leave hours.

Improving Recruiting

Telecommuting programs enable firms to recruit from a wider audience, tapping into new labor pools such as the physically-impaired, the elderly and geographically-remote employees.

Keeping Good Employees



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Because employees view telecommuting as a job benefit, morale and motivation are increased. Job turnover, and recruitment costs and training expenses, are reduced. Telecommuting also increases flexibility in accommodating employee needs during pregnancy or relocation.

CHALLENGES OF TELECOMMUTING

Despite the popularity of work-at-home arrangements, numerous concerns are associated with telecommuting. Telecommuting critics believe those who work-at-home are isolated, lose opportunities for advancement and remain unprotected from potential abuses such as violation of overtime standards. Other disadvantages reported by telecommuters in several pilot programs include:

- * **Maintaining ties with co-workers.** How will LFRA keep employees "in the loop?" How will they keep comraderie high? Many organizations schedule telecommuting on a part-time basis only. This way, the telecommuter can still attend meetings with co-workers.
- * **Staying visible.** Many employees fear that they'll be forgotten when it comes time for a promotion or other opportunities. Studies show that this is simply not the case, especially with part-time telecommuting.
- * **Managing living space.** Telecommuters need to have some working space set aside, but usually the amount needed is small: a portion of a room or the garage, for example. The home office should, however, be as separate as possible from family living areas. This is particularly important if there will be other people at home during working hours.
- * **Separating work and home.** Telecommuters may wonder if they are expected to take care of household chores because they are home all day. Friends, family and neighbors may often call to chat. Telecommuting can also aggravate tendencies toward "workaholism", spending more time on work that would be spent if working at the office.

Studies on telecommuting have listed management and culture as primary impediments to implementing telecommuting programs. Upper management resistance is the most frequently cited objection to telecommuting. Managers complain that telecommuting increases the difficulty of accounting for work time, disciplining participants and also frequently decreases productivity as well as office morale among those who can't telecommute.

Telecommuting forces supervisors to learn to evaluate performance by the quality, quantity and timeliness of tasks or projects completed - not by the actual monitoring of work hours. They learn to manage by results, and encourage frequent communication to ensure that tasks and performance expectations are clearly defined. If an employee fails to meet goals, or abuses the program in any way, he or she will lose the privilege to telecommute.

Cost remains a significant issue in telecommuting projects. Even the implementation of seemingly simple work-at-home arrangements involves start-up costs in training-equipment and materials. Major equipment purchases such as PC's, modems, fax machines, xerox machines, and additional



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telephone lines are expenses that may be incurred by the employee or by LFRA if funds are available.

TELECOMMUTING PROFILE

NOT EVERY EMPLOYEE, SUPERVISOR OR JOB IS APPROPRIATE FOR TELECOMMUTING. The very nature of the job is an indicator of whether telecommuting should be considered. Any responsibility where the individual works alone performing tasks might be well suited. Those tasks include:

- * planning
- * scheduling
- * preparing performance reviews
- * writing reports
- * audits
- * research and analysis
- * conceptualizing, reading and writing
- * conducting business by phone

While the job responsibilities are the key indicator of whether telecommuting is an option or not, the personal traits and characteristics of the employee and supervisor will be considered. The following telecommuting profile can be a valuable tool in identifying tasks that can be accomplished in the home setting.

The following questions are to be used as a guideline in determining telecommuting as an alternate work method. Record the typical tasks you complete on a daily or weekly basis and categorize them by the number of hours you spend either at the office or could be done at home.

Telecommutable and Non-Telecommutable Tasks

Typical Task	Hours per week which must be in the office	Hours per week which can be done at home?
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Responding to citizen or customer request face to face

Responding to citizen or customer request by phone

Face to face meetings that must be face to face

Meetings that could be conducted by phone



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Training, coaching and monitoring employees

Computer use (in-mail, speed memos, etc.)

Reading and writing memos and letters

Conducting business by phone

Analyzing data and reports

Preparing documents, agendas, action plans, etc.

Preparing performance appraisals

Planning/Scheduling

Audit Reports

Referring to information in stationary files

Using non-removable reference materials

Faxing communications

Making copies on the photo copier

Using equipment that cannot be moved from the office

Other

Given the information provided in the table, how much sense does telecommuting make?

- one day per week
- two days per week
- three days per week
- about once every two weeks
- occasionally for a special project



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Do you currently take work home or have you done so in the past? If so, what work assignments do you perform from home?

What room or part of a room in your home may be an appropriate work area?

What equipment do you currently have that would be used to telecommute?

What specific equipment would you need to telecommute?

What benefit would telecommuting have to you and to LFRA?

EMPLOYEE SUITABILITY FOR TELECOMMUTING

High	Low	
—	—	requires minimal supervision
—	—	requires minimal social action
—	—	high level of job knowledge and skill
—	—	enjoys working at home at least some of the time
—	—	well organized
—	—	demonstrates a high level of productivity
—	—	comfortable with the idea of working alone
—	—	has a full understanding of departmental goals
—	—	establishes priorities and manages time well
—	—	has a proven track record of personal motivation which is reflected in past performance appraisals



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- ____ likes to work independently
- ____ schedules and plans work effectively
- ____ has a full understanding of own job goals and objectives
- ____ has open communication with supervisor
- ____ lets supervisor know when behind in projects or when deadlines cannot be met

COMMON QUESTIONS

How do I know that telecommuters are really working?

The employee's completed work product is the indicator that he or she is working. Managers of telecommuter must focus on the quality and timeliness of the work product, rather than the process the telecommuter used to achieve the end result. Managers must manage by objectives or results, rather than by observation. The manager and the employee should establish the employee's goals and objective together.

Will the employee work less if he/she are working at home unsupervised?

No. Survey results show marked improvements in productivity. Productivity increases because employees have fewer distractions and interruptions, work at their best times, and are less stressed due to the absence of the commute to work and not often having to dress up.

How will managers know how to supervise telecommuters?

Telecommuting presents an opportunity for managers to become better managers. By focusing on the employee's work product, managers will increase their own organizational skills and their own skill in managing by objectives.

Won't loyalty to the organization diminish?

No. In actuality, loyalty is likely to improve since employees are happier with their working conditions. Employee morale also improves as a result of telecommuting.

Is this program only for employees who use and/or have computers?

No. A computer is not mandatory to be a successful telecommuter. The minimum equipment necessary to participate in the program is a telephone. Many successful telecommuters use only pencil and paper to perform their duties.



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How can social interaction be maintained to keep telecommuters from feeling isolated from their colleagues?

There are many techniques for overcoming feelings of isolation. These include part-time telecommuting, core days in the office and frequent communication by telephone or voice mail. The telecommuters should be included in all scheduled meetings and events.

What are the issues the telecommuter should be aware of?

Coping with Interruptions: Often friends, neighbors and family members do not realize that a telecommuter is working. Although an occasional interruption may be welcome, telecommuters must learn to keep interruptions to a minimum.

Working Long Hours: Telecommuters need to be aware of the tendency to work long hours and the need to take regular breaks.

Exercising Self-Control: If telecommuters find themselves procrastinating, they should evaluate their work habits and make necessary changes to ensure productivity.

Designating Space: A designated work area is recommended for telecommuting. A separate work space may mean fewer distractions or interruptions and a higher level of discipline and organization.

Gaining Support: A family's or supervisor's attitude may sometimes be detrimental to a telecommuting arrangement. Telecommuters must work to gain the support and understanding of those around them.

What happens if the employee is hurt at home while working?

If the employee is hurt while working, he or she may be covered by worker's compensation, just as if at the regular place of business.

Is telecommuting a substitute for child or elder care?

No. A telecommuter must focus on his or her job, not handle demanding child or elder care situations. However Telecommuters are better able to manage their work/family schedules because they have greater flexibility in their work hours.



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Can telecommuting result in reduced use of sick leave?

Yes. An employee working in the regular office usually has to use a half-day sick time to get to a doctor or dental appointment. A telecommuter can take an hour or two off for the appointment and then work that time later in the day or the week, thus not using any sick time. Also, often an employee that does not feel well enough to drive to the office can work some hours at home.

Will the need for overtime decrease as a result of telecommuting?

With telecommuting, employee productivity generally increases, which could reduce overtime.

Is it possible to restructure a job so that the employee can successfully telecommute?

Yes. Most jobs are suitable for telecommuting part-time. An employee can organize his or her work to combine all the telecommutable tasks (such as reading, writing, data or word processing and conducting business by telephone) into the days worked at home. The employee schedules meetings for his or her days in the office.

How do you manage the employees who are not telecommuting?

It is important to include the non-telecommuters in your planning process. Specific guidelines should be established regarding how the work load is distributed while the telecommuters are telecommuting so as not to overload the non-telecommuters. Also, all employees should have a clear understanding of the selection criteria for telecommuters to minimize feelings of resentment over who was and who was not selected to participate in the program.

Do telecommuting employees qualify for a federal tax deduction?

Telecommuting employees generally do not qualify for federal tax deduction; that is, unless certain tests are met. The area of the home must be used exclusively and on a regular basis as the tax payer's principal place of business. "Exclusively" means you do not ever use the space for personal use. "Regular" means on a continuing basis. The occasional business use of a part of a home does not meet the regular use test. Employees who purchase their own computers and use them for telecommuting are not eligible for accelerated depreciation because the purchase of the computer is not a condition of employment.

TELECOMPUTING



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Telecomputing is the computer side of telecommuting. The emergence of technology has eliminated the need for employees to be tethered to an office - especially if the work they do requires a computer.

The technical aspects of telecommuting can get expensive. Selecting the right method is an important factor in the success of telecommuting. Differing needs require flexibility in the types of PC's used in the telecommuting environment. Options include:

- * Portable PC's - goes anywhere and can be shared among different telecommuters. Among the most effective, flexible, and faster methods of initiating telecomputing.
- * Desktop PC - provides flexible on-line or stand-alone capability used by those who frequently telecommute from the same location or where mobility is not a consideration.
- * Docking Station PC - a configuration where keyboard and screen remain at designated locations. The removable processor becomes a portable PC with its own built-in keyboard and screen. It is plugged into a docking station for on-line access, or it can be used as a lightweight stand-alone portable PC. Provides maximum flexibility for the telecommuter who does not have to share a computer with others. Other benefits relate to reduced software cost and data availability.

When connectivity to a mainframe computer or network system is required for telecomputing, there are a number of considerations to establish the communication link:

- * Connectivity to the mainframe computer - used to access mainframe applications, electronic mail and word processing. Implementation considerations include hardware and software, US West telephone lines, and system security. The inherent nature of the technology results in slow system response.
- * Connectivity to a local area network (LAN) - allows access to LAN's and the mainframe, and works well in environments where software does not have to be "downloaded" into a work station.
- * Connectivity to LAN's through a network communication server - allows access to LAN's and the mainframe. Can share all LAN resources at high speeds and eliminates the need to "download" software to the work station. Works with any PC having a modem.
- * Connectivity to LAN's through fiber optics - allows high volume, high speed access to LAN's and the mainframe. A future consideration that will require security issues to catch up with technology before this is a viable alternative.

TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT

Telecommuting, or working from another location such as home or an office close to home, is a work alternative that LFRA may choose to make available to some employees when a mutually



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beneficial situation exists.

Telecommuting is not an employee benefit, but rather is an alternate method of meeting the needs of LFRA. Employees do not have a "right" to telecommute; the arrangement can be terminated by either the employee or LFRA at any time with or without cause and LFRA reserves the right to change the schedule at any point in time.

These are the conditions of telecommuting agreed upon by the telecommuter and his or her supervisor.

1. The employee agrees to work at the following location:

2. The employee will telecommute _____ days per week.

3. The employee's work hours will be as follows:

4. The employee agrees to provide the supervisor a Telecommuting Work Plan which identifies the assignments to be worked on during telecommuting hours.

5. The following equipment will be used by the employee in the remote work location:

6. The following is the arrangement agreed upon for handling telephone calls made by the telecommuter:

7. The employee agrees to call the central office to obtain his or her messages at least _____ times per day.

8. The employee agrees to obtain from the central office all supplies needed for work out-of-pocket expenses for supplies regularly available at LFRA office will not normally be reimbursed.



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9. Additional conditions agreed upon by the telecommuter and the Fire Chief or his/her designee are as follows:

I have reviewed the above material with _____ prior to his or her participation in LFRA's telecommuting program.

Date

Supervisor

Date

Fire Chief

The above material has been discussed with me and I agree to it.

Date

Employee