

**United States Department Of The Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
National Human Resources Management Center
Denver Federal Center, Building 50
P. O. Box 25047
Denver, Colorado 80225-0047**

In Reply Refer To:
1400-630 (HR-220) P

March 12, 1999

EMS TRANSMISSION

Instruction Memorandum No. HR-99-025

Expires 9/30/00

To: All Center Managers and Supervisors

From: Director, National Human Resources Management Center

Subject: Telecommuting

By instruction memorandum number HR-99-024, employees were informed that the Centers are starting a six-month pilot program on telecommuting. This instruction memorandum also instructed employees who are interested in participating in telecommuting to request to do so through their supervisors.

Attached for your use is guidance on telecommuting. Included is an Overview for Supervisors; an Agreement for Telecommuting; Tips for Telecommuters; Tips for Supervisors of Telecommuters; a sample Self-Inspection Safety Checklist; and a copy of the memorandum to all employees. The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), Local 1945 has been consulted on this program.

As stated in the instruction memorandum to all employees, telecommuting is a management option, not an employee entitlement. While it is expected that not every employee request may be approved either because the job does not lend itself to working offsite or because of some other constraint, full consideration should be given to any request received. Authorization of employee participation must be conducted in an equitable, fair, and consistent manner.

Employees are required to use government furnished equipment, i.e., computers, printers, fax machines, etc. Computers will normally be limited to laptops with non-network access due to the limited number of remote GroupWise connectivities available. If the supervisor and employee determine that remote GroupWise is necessary, contact the NC Help Desk, HR-250, at 6-0611.

Final approval of individual telecommuting arrangements should be with the immediate supervisor. For pilot evaluation purposes, please forward a copy of approved telecommuting agreements to NHRMC, HR-220. In addition, if there are any costs associated with the employee working at home, i.e., cost of an extra phone line, fax machines, etc., forward that information also.

If you have specific questions on this pilot, please feel free to contact HR-220.

Signed by:
Linda D. Sedbrook
Director

Authenticated by:
Darlene Robitaille
Secretary

6 Attachments

- 1 - Letter to Employees (IM HR-98-24) (3pp)
- 2 - Overview for Supervisor (4pp)
- 3 - Agreement for Telecommuting (4pp)
- 4 - Tips for Telecommuters (1pp)
- 5 - Tips for Supervisors (1pp)
- 6 - Safety Checklist (3pp)

Distribution

RS-150A, BLM Library
NI-101, Reading File
HR-220

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EMS TRANSMISSION

Instruction Memorandum No. HR-99-024

Expires 9/30/00

To: All BC, HR, NI, and RS Employees

From: Director, National Human Resources Management Center

Subject: Telecommuting

The purpose of this memorandum is to officially announce the start of a six-month pilot program, and set forth the procedures to be followed by employees interested in participating.

Telecommuting is working away from the principle office at an off-site location such as the home. It is designed to benefit the employee and the organization by meeting employee needs as well as management, organizational, and operational requirements. Telecommuting also supports the public effort to reduce pollution, traffic congestion, and energy consumption.

Telecommuting is a management option and not an employee entitlement. It is an arrangement that you and your supervisor enter into voluntarily for mutual benefit. When approving requests for participation in telecommuting, supervisors will consider each employee's situation individually taking many factors into consideration including additional costs which may be incurred as well as office coverage. In addition to being suited for telecommuting, participation must be limited to jobs, or portions of one's job, which do not require the employee to be on site. Employees should recognize that not all jobs are suitable for telecommuting. Employees with identical job functions need not all be approved for participation. Additionally, normally only employees who are performing at the results achieved level will be approved to telecommute.

Within the Centers, three types of telecommuting have been established:

a. Short Duration: An employee, with supervisory approval, may be authorized to work at home for a short duration. In most circumstances, this may be for one day, up to a maximum of three consecutive days. Appropriate reasons to work at home for a short duration could be

Attachment 1-1

based upon a special project that needs to be completed, a heavy workload that has short time frames for completion, or for other related reasons. Working at home for a short duration does not mean that an employee can work at home on a regular and reoccurring basis each week.

b. **Efficiencies and Economies:** Employees who work under objective and well-established performance standards (preferably numeric) may request to telecommute by providing their supervisor with performance enhancements to productivity. For example, an employee inputs records into a system at an average of 80 records per day while in the office during a standard eight-hour day. The same employee submits a proposal to telecommute every Wednesday for eight hours claiming they will be able to maintain an average of 90 records inputted during the telecommuting day. The increase is due to the lack of interruptions in the office and the commuter fatigue he/she encounters. If the request to telecommute is approved, the supervisor and the employee enter into a telecommuting agreement based on this standard.

c. **Special Circumstances:** There may be “special circumstances” where an employee requests that he/she be allowed to work at home for longer periods than one to three days. These requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis. This program may be used to accommodate employees who are recovering from illness or injury, or other special circumstances. In those instances where an employee requests to work at home for extended periods due to medical reasons, management approval will be based upon the employee providing appropriate medical documentation.

If you believe that your job, or a significant segment of it, is conducive for telecommuting one or more days per week, and you are interested in participating in the pilot, you need to inform your supervisor and request his/her approval. Supervisory approval must be obtained prior to an employee participating in the pilot project.

Your request should be in writing and include, as a minimum, the following:

- a. Indicate the type of telecommuting you are interested in.
- b. The number of hours and days per week you would be interested in telecommuting.
- c. The specific job functions you would perform while telecommuting.
- d. A description of the work area where you will perform your duties.
- e. A list of the equipment you would need BLM to furnish. Indicate both hardware and software needs.

Study and experience indicate that employees with a genuine interest in participating in telecommuting are more successful in the program. Additionally, well organized employees, with good work habits who require a minimum of supervision and can demonstrate their productivity, are more likely to be successful telecommuters. Attached are “Tips for Telecommuters” to help make your telecommuting experience more successful.

Employees participating in telecommuting are required to use government furnished equipment, i.e., computers, printers, fax machines, etc. During this pilot period, computers will normally be limited to laptops with non-network access for short-term or efficiencies and economies telecommuters. If additional ADP requirements such as remote-Groupwise are necessary, these will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

When a supervisor and employee initially agree to a telecommuting arrangement, an Agreement for Telecommuting (see Attachment 2) must be jointly signed by the individual employee and supervisor. In addition, a Self-Inspection Safety Checklist (see Attachment 3) must be completed. For subsequent requests to telecommute for short durations under the initial agreement, employees must submit their request to telecommute to the supervisor by e-mail or whatever means the supervisor deems appropriate. A Self-Inspection Safety Checklist does not need to be completed for each short duration request. The supervisor and/or employee may terminate the agreement to telecommute at any time.

During the pilot project, the Centers hope to include a cross section of employees from each of the four Denver Centers in order to be in a position to evaluate the success/failure of the pilot. Employees participating in this pilot may be requested to participate in a related survey to evaluate the flexiplace project. NHRMC will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the six-month pilot.

If you have any questions regarding this memo or desire further information, please contact the Employee/Labor Relations and Employee Development Group, HR-220.

Signed by:
Linda D. Sedbrook
Director

Authenticated by:
Darlene Robitaille
Secretary

3 Attachments

- 1- Tips for Telecommuters
- 2 - Agreement for Telecommuting
- 3 - Safety Checklist

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Attachment 1-3

Telecommuting - An Overview for Supervisors

Telecommuting - performing work functions at any location away from the main office by means of electronic communications. Telecommuting at the Centers will consist of “short duration”, “efficiencies and economies” and “special circumstances”.

Both the National Performance Review (NPR) and President Clinton’s Climate Change Action Plan identify telecommuting as one solution to accommodate the demand for increased mobility and to enhance worker satisfaction. President Clinton has directed federal agencies to support telecommuting as a way to expand family-friendly work arrangements throughout the Executive Branch. In an effort to comply with the above, the Centers are implementing a six-month pilot program on telecommuting. A team comprised of a management member from each of the Centers developed a policy on telecommuting using the guidance established by numerous federal agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management.

As a supervisor, you are being provided the opportunity to participate in this pilot program. It is voluntary for all personnel involved, however, you are strongly encouraged to participate in the program by approving requests made by employees who are interested in telecommuting. An employee and supervisor both must agree that their participation is appropriate for the individual involved and the type of work to be accomplished. Remember, telecommuting is a management option, not an employee entitlement.

Types of Telecommuting

As mentioned previously, there are three types of telecommuting arrangements being piloted at the Centers. The short duration type provides that an employee, with supervisory approval, may be authorized to work at home for a short duration. This may be for one day, up to a maximum of three consecutive days. Appropriate reasons to work at home under this program could be based upon a special project that needs completed, a heavy workload that has short time frames for completion, or for other related reasons. In most situations, working at home for short durations does not mean that an employee can work at home on a regular and reoccurring basis each week.

Telecommuting under efficiencies and economies is for those situations where an employee can demonstrate in their proposal to telecommute that productivity would be enhanced. This type of telecommuting would best lend itself to jobs with stand-alone requirements, numeric performance standards, and very little interaction with others such as data input. In some situations, working at home under this type of telecommuting may be on a regular and reoccurring basis each week. A Telecommuting Agreement and Self-Inspection Safety Checklist should be completed.

Telecommuting under special circumstances is for a continuing work at home situation for one or more days within a specified time period. This type may be used to accommodate employees who are recovering from illness or injury, or other special circumstances. Management approval is based upon the employee providing appropriate medical documentation.

Employees that participate in any of the telecommuting types must complete a Safety Self-Inspection Checklist and a Telecommuting Agreement. For subsequent requests for short-duration telecommuting, employees must request each telecommute by e-mail or whatever means the supervisor deems appropriate.

Supervisor's Role

For a number of years, the roles of managers have been undergoing a lot of change. These new roles are consistent with an information-based workforce and telecommuting functions. The evolving roles require you to be a facilitator, to push responsibility to the lowest practical level, to manage by results, and to support employee efforts to achieve more fulfilling work and to support the expansion of flexible family friendly work arrangements, including greater use of home based telecommuting. This type of management is a key component for a successful telecommuting arrangement. The other components are suitability of work, employee selection, training, and technical issues.

Suitability of Work

Many positions may lend themselves to telecommuting. Work suitable for telecommuting depends on job content, rather than job title, type of appointment, or work schedule. For example, telecommuting may be feasible for work that requires extensive thinking and writing such as data analysis, reviewing grants or cases, and writing decisions or reports. It may also be appropriate for telephone-intensive tasks and computer oriented tasks such as programming, data entry, and word processing.

The following job profile guidelines will help you determine whether the position is suitable for telecommuting.

- The position has clearly defined work objectives. The ideal telecommuting job has observable outputs and discernible beginning and end points. Jobs with hard-to-measure outputs should not be eliminated from consideration however.

- Face-to-face contacts can be scheduled in advance. A position that has lots of contact with others on the phone, via electronic means, or in scheduled meetings may be a good prospect. If there are few if any crises that require immediate face-to-face contacts, most other contacts can be scheduled when the telecommuter is in the office.

- The position does not rely exclusively on using resources accessible at the primary office location. Duties that require frequent access to files, equipment, or supplies that cannot easily, economically or electronically be moved to the remote site do not lend themselves to telecommuting.

These guidelines can also be applied to positions that have cyclical tasks, some of which could be accomplished by telecommuters. Telecommuting might also be accomplished by redistributing tasks, a temporary change in duties, or as part of a major functional re-engineering.

Employee Selection

Equally important to a successful telecommuting experience is the selection of participants. Since this is a voluntary program, you should begin with a self-motivated employee. If the employee requests to participate in telecommuting and his/her position is suitable, the following criteria may be used in making your determination:

- The employee should have an above average performance history and be successful in his/her current and previous positions. The employee should have a current rating of record of results achieved. The employee should be well organized, results-oriented, highly disciplined, conscientious and possess strong communication skills.

- The employee should have long and in-depth experience. This employee will be more successful than someone who is learning the basics of the job. The employee with in-depth job knowledge and understanding of BLM objectives will retain focus on job goals and objectives with minimal supervision.

- The employee should have experience in handling a wide variety of assignments. This employee will be more successful than someone whose experience has been limited to fewer kinds of tasks. The employee should be flexible, be able to establish priorities and manage time well.

The above criteria is guidance and does not preclude you from allowing employees that do not meet this criteria from participating in telecommuting.

Technical Issues

Employees participating in telecommuting are required to use government furnished equipment such as laptop computers, printers, fax machines etc. During this pilot period, laptops will be limited to non-network access types. Additional ADP requirements may be necessary for long-term telecommuting or special projects, but those requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Implementation

Once you have approved an employee's request to participate in telecommuting, your tasks for implementation are:

- Review the Centers' policy on telecommuting with the employee.

- Complete a Telecommuting Agreement with employee. The sample agreement may be modified to meet a particular situation. The approving official should be the immediate supervisor.
- Verify a self-inspection safety checklist which the employee submits.
- Review with the employee the logistical requirements, i.e., what equipment, supplies, and records, will be provided by whom, and responsibility for getting them to the remote location.
- If applicable, schedule the installation of equipment at the remote site. If the employee cannot do this, you will need to use the designated agency work group responsible.
- Inform other employees of the telecommuting employee's schedule and of any unusual resulting impacts.
- Closely monitor the first few weeks to assure that any problems are resolved quickly.

AGREEMENT FOR TELECOMMUTING

The following constitutes the terms and conditions for the undersigned employee to telecommute.

Voluntary Participation

The employee agrees to work at the agency-approved alternative workplace indicated below and to follow all applicable policies and procedures. Employee recognizes that the telecommuting arrangement is not an employee entitlement, but an additional method the agency may approve to accomplish work.

Trial Period

The employee and agency agree to try out the arrangement for _____ (a specified period of time) unless unforeseeable difficulties require earlier cancellation. Either party may terminate this agreement at any time.

Duty Station and Alternative Workplace

Agency and employee agree that the employee's official duty station is Bureau of Land Management, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado. The approved alternative workplace is: _____ (specify street and number, city and state). All pay, leave, and travel entitlements are based on the official duty station.

Work Schedule and Tour of Duty

Agency and employee agree the employee's official tour of duty will be: _____ (specify days and hours). Core hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Employees must work during core hours unless otherwise approved for leave or credit hours. For those employees on flexible work schedules, hours will remain in accordance with established procedures referenced in BLM Manual 1400-610 and Information Bulletin HR-98-006.

Time and Attendance

The employee is approved to work offsite at home in accordance with the attached schedule of telecommuting days or partial days. A copy of this schedule will be given to the timekeeper. The employee will keep an accurate written accounting of actual time worked including start and stop time and lunch period.

Overtime

The employee agrees to work overtime and compensatory time only when ordered and approved by the supervisor in advance and understands that overtime work without such approval is not compensated and may result in termination of the telecommuting privilege and/or other appropriate action.

Leave

The employee agrees to follow established office procedures for requesting and obtaining approval of leave.

Work Assignments/Performance

The employee agrees to complete all assigned work according to procedures mutually agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor and according to the procedures, guidelines and standards in the employee's performance plan. The employee agrees to provide regular reports if required by the supervisor to help judge performance. The employee understands that a decline in performance may be grounds for canceling the alternative workplace arrangement.

Official Duties

Unless otherwise instructed, employee agrees to perform official duties only at the alternative workplace. Employee agrees not to conduct personal business while in official duty status, for example, caring for dependents or making home repairs.

Equipment/Supplies

Employee agrees to protect any Government-owned equipment and to use the equipment only for official purposes. The agency agrees to install, service, and maintain any Government-owned equipment issued to the telecommuting employee. The Agency agrees to provide the employee with all necessary office supplies. Employees will use their Government issued AT&T calling cards to make official long-distance business calls.

Computer Security

Where a government computer is assigned to the alternate workstation, no access to computer by unauthorized persons will be permitted; unauthorized software or diskettes will not be used thus/hereby minimizing threat of importing computer viruses.

Safeguarding of Records

Records and case files taken to the alternate work station must not be disclosed or made available to any individual other than the employee. No copies may be made at home for any purpose other than those required to complete work assignments. The employee agrees to take every reasonable precaution to ensure that official records are not subjected to damage or loss. The employee agrees to protect Government/agency records from unauthorized disclosure and will comply with requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, the Freedom of Information Act 5 U.S.C. 552 and any Department and/or Bureau guidance.

Liability

The Agency will not be liable for damages to employee's property when using an alternative worksite nor will the Agency be responsible for any operating costs associated with the employee's residence, including home maintenance, insurance or utilities. The employee understands he or she does not relinquish any entitlement to reimbursement for authorized expenses incurred while conducting business for the Government, as provided by statute and regulations.

Worksite Area/Inspection

The employee agrees to provide a work area adequate for performance of official duties. If requested, the employee also agrees to permit the Agency to inspect the alternative workplace during the employee's normal working hours (with prior notification) to ensure proper maintenance of Government-owned property and conformance with safety standards. Employees will also be required to complete a self-certification safety checklist.

Injury Compensation

Employee understands he or she is covered under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act if injured in the course of actually performing official duties at the regular office or the alternative duty station. The employee agrees to notify the supervisor immediately of any accident or injury that occurs at the alternative workplace and to complete any required forms. The supervisor agrees to investigate such a report immediately.

Standards of Conduct

The employee agrees he or she is bound by agency standards of conduct while working at the alternative worksite. Nothing in this agreement precludes the agency from taking any appropriate disciplinary or adverse action against an employee who fails to comply with the provisions of this agreement.

This agreement may be terminated at any time by either the employee or supervisor.

Employee

Date

Supervisor

Date

TIPS FOR TELECOMMUTERS

- If telecommuting from home, have a work space dedicated for your home office complete with desk and telephone. Other equipment such as a computer, modem, electronic mail, a voice message system, fax machine, etc., may be necessary for your particular job.
- Work to establish a new routine. You will need to set up a morning “ritual” to start the workday. Create an end-of-day ritual also.
- Take breaks throughout the day. Remember, without interruptions you could work yourself into the ground. Pace yourself. Take a break to walk around the house, bring the mail in, let the dog out or water the plants.
- Refrain from procrastination; complete assignments in a timely manner.
- Be results oriented and focus on your objectives/work products.
- Plan ahead for a telecommuting day while you are in the office so you are sure to have everything you need when working at the alternative work site.
- Make arrangements for child/elder care if you have an infant, toddler or elderly relative who requires constant care and attention.
- Make sure your family and neighbors know that you are home to work.
- Keep in touch with your office and your supervisor.
- Plan to participate in department and group meetings whenever they are held.
- Talk to your supervisor about any problems that arise, or if you wish to terminate the telecommuting arrangement. Telecommuting is not for everybody -- and that’s OK.

TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS OF TELECOMMUTERS

- Trust your telecommuters.
- Guide your entire work group through a series of “what if” scenarios. Come up with workable solutions as a team.
- Use telecommuting as an opportunity to strengthen your own management skills.
- Manage by measuring results - schedule regular status reports.
- Telecommute yourself when you have the opportunity. It will help increase your personal effectiveness and improve your understanding of the ups and downs of telecommuting.
- Look at things from your telecommuter’s point of view. Understand time frames involved in completing tasks and resources required to complete them.
- Delegate assignments fairly among telecommuters and non-telecommuters.
- Include telecommuters in day-to-day activities; look for clues that a telecommuter is feeling isolated or left out.
- Expect that things might not go smoothly all the time.
- Communicate on a regular basis; let the telecommuter know you are there for them.
- Be willing and prepared to increase the number of days of telecommuting if it is working well for the employee and the office.
- Be prepared to let the employee terminate the program - or terminate it yourself, if it is clearly not working out.
- Most importantly, keep an open mind about telecommuting - give it a fair trial.

EMPLOYEE SELF-CERTIFICATION SAFETY CHECKLIST

Name:

Position:

Organization:

Business Telephone:

The following checklist is designed to assess the overall safety of your alternative worksite. Please read and complete the self-certification safety checklist. Upon completion, you and your supervisor should sign and date the checklist in the spaces provided.

Alternative Worksite Location:

Describe the Designated Work Area:

Workplace Environment

1. Are temperature, noise, ventilation and lighting levels adequate for maintaining your normal level of job performance? Yes [] No []
2. Is all paint either lead-free or in good condition? Yes [] No []
3. Are all stairs with four or more steps equipped with handrails? Yes [] No []
4. Are all circuit breakers and/or fuses in the electrical panel labeled as to intended service? Yes [] No []
5. Do circuit breakers clearly indicate if they are in the open or closed position? Yes [] No []
6. Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards that would cause physical harm (frayed wires, bare conductors, loose wires, flexible wires running through walls, exposed wires to ceiling)? Yes [] No []
7. Will the building's electrical system permit the grounding of electrical equipment? Yes [] No []
8. Are aisles, doorways, and corners free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement? Yes [] No []
9. Are file cabinets and storage closets arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways? Yes [] No []

10. Do chairs have any loose casters (wheels) and are the rungs and legs of the chairs sturdy? Yes [] No []

11. Are the phone lines, electrical cords, and extension wires secured under a desk or alongside a baseboard? Yes [] No []

12. Is the office space neat, clean, and free of excessive amounts of combustibles? Yes [] No []

13. Are floor surfaces clean, dry, level, and free of worn or frayed seams? Yes [] No []

14. Are carpets well secured to the floor and free of frayed or worn seams? Yes [] No []

Computer Workstation (if applicable)

15. Is your chair adjustable? Yes [] No []

16. Do you know how to adjust your chair? Yes [] No []

17. Is your back adequately supported by a backrest? Yes [] No []

18. Are your feet on the floor or fully supported by a footrest? Yes [] No []

19. Are you satisfied with the placement of your monitor and keyboard? Yes [] No []

20. Is it easy to read the text on your screen? Yes [] No []

21. Do you need a document holder? Yes [] No []

22. Do you have enough leg room at your desk? Yes [] No []

23. Is the screen free from noticeable glare? Yes [] No []

24. Is the top of the screen eye level? Yes [] No []

25. Is there space to rest the arms while not keying? Yes [] No []

26. When keying, are your forearms close to parallel with the floor? Yes [] No []

27. Are your wrists fairly straight when keying? Yes [] No []

Employee Signature

Date

NOTE: Employees are responsible for informing their supervisor of any significant change.

I have reviewed the above Employee Self-Certification Safety Checklist and have discussed any matters of concern with the employee.

Supervisor's Signature

Date