

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS DIRECTIVE

4610.2

11/2/15

OFFICE COVERAGE, GOVERNMENT OFFICE CLOSURES, AND TELEWORK AT FSIS

I. PURPOSE

This directive supplements [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002, *Telework Program*](#) by clarifying FSIS' telework policy. This directive reminds supervisors of their responsibility for ensuring full and efficient accomplishment of the Agency's mission, maintenance of appropriate office coverage, and, when necessary, the physical presence of employees. This directive also sets out the Agency telework policy relating to Government office closures. Supervisors and employees participating in the telework program are to follow the instructions set out in the [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#) and the instructions in this directive.

II. BACKGROUND

A. [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), states that the appropriateness of the amount of telework suitable for eligible employees is a determination reserved to Agency management. Telework is not an employee entitlement. Supervisors can decide the frequency of telework participation on an individual, case-by-case basis, after considering the nature of the position, job requirements, and the office mission. Supervisors and employees are to document all approved telework arrangements on a USDA Telework Agreement Form (AD-3018). Supervisors have flexibility to approve additional telework days or other arrangements in lieu of telework days.

B. Also, according to [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), management (program area management or the immediate supervisor) reserves the right to require employees who reside in the local commuting area (e.g., employees receiving Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA locality pay) to report to the office for imperative mission related purposes.

III. SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Supervisors are to decide whether the number of days employees are consecutively away from the office, either by telework or on scheduled days off (SDOs), is appropriate, and whether the physical absence of employees from the office is negatively affecting office productivity, especially during the office's core hours.

B. Supervisors are to meet in person with employees, when such meetings are geographically feasible.

C. Supervisors are to instruct employees who reside in the DC local commuting area to attend any meeting held in the Administrator's office or in the Office of the Under Secretary in person, even if it results in employees commuting on their telework days or SDOs.

D. Supervisors are to maintain the same level of interaction with teleworking employees as they do with employees who are in the office.

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E. Supervisors can disapprove employees for telework for performance and conduct issues (see [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#)).

IV. TELEWORKING EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Employees are to be mindful of the number of consecutive days they are physically working off-site to ensure that there is no negative impact on office productivity, especially during the office's established core hours.

B. Employees who live in the local commuting area are to come into the office when they are instructed to attend a meeting in the Administrator's Office or in the Office of the Under Secretary.

C. Teleworking employees are to provide their off-site phone numbers to their supervisors and colleagues. Employees with the capability to do so are to transfer their work number to their telework site.

D. Employees are not to use "out of office" messages on their voice mail or e-mail systems when teleworking. They are to check and respond to telephone and e-mail correspondence just as they would when they are working from the office in order to maintain productivity.

V. TELEWORK DOCUMENTATION

A. The FSIS Telework office accounts for the telework status of all Agency employees. Employees can access all telework documentation at: [Telework Program](#) and may request documentation or access from the FSIS Telework office either by e-mailing to telework.awa@fsis.usda.gov, faxing (202) 205-0319, or going in person to room 2158-South Building.

B. An eligible employee who elects to participate or modify his or her participation in the telework program is to work with his or her supervisor to complete and submit form AD-3018, USDA Telework Agreement.

C. Employees who decline participation in the USDA Telework Program are to complete to the form AD-3018 and indicate that they opt out of telework in the appropriate section of the form.

D. Employees are to submit the form AD-3018 by either e-mailing to telework.awa@fsis.usda.gov, faxing to (202) 205-0319, or delivering in person to room 2158-South Building.

E. A supervisor who disapproves an employee's telework participation because of performance or conduct issues is to provide a disapproval letter to the employee and to the FSIS Telework office.

F. Employees need to submit documentation to the FSIS Telework office only when they initially request telework or want to modify their participation in the program. FSIS does not require employees to renew their telework agreements annually.

G. As set out in [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#), employees are not required to renew their agreements annually, however employees and their supervisors are to review and discuss the agreements on an annual basis. In addition, the FSIS telework office reviews all agreements on an annual basis.

H. For information on how to record telework on Time and Attendance Records see: [Telework Program](#).

VI. GOVERNMENT OFFICE CLOSURE

A. When the Office of Personnel Management or the Department announces a modified operating status because of inclement weather or special events that severely impede commuting, employees with core, ad hoc, or situational telework agreements are required to telework from their home or their nearby approved alternative location. Supervisors of these employees may grant excused absence (i.e., in the WebT&A, Admin/Excused Absence, 66-Office Closed) to them when it is not possible for the employees to work for some or all of the workday when Federal offices are closed. Examples of situations when supervisors may grant Admin/Excused Absence to those employees include, but are not limited to:

1. Power Outages;
2. Interference with internet connectivity;
3. Inclement weather or significant environmental conditions that require employees to attend to the care of their home, property, family or vehicle;
4. Dependent care when there are no alternatives available; and
5. Unavailability of or unavailability of access to, specialized equipment, needed to perform telework.

B. If the supervisor does not approve Admin/Excused Absence leave, the employee may cover the previously scheduled time for teleworking or working from a nearby approved alternative location by using credit hours, flex time, or unscheduled annual leave.

C. When inclement weather is forecast several days in advance (e.g., on Monday for a Thursday weather event, or Friday for a Monday event), employees in work status (e.g., not on leave or on SDO) and who have core, ad hoc, or situational telework agreements are to ensure that they will have their computers available and that they are ready to work.

D. Employees who are not eligible for telework, who have opted out of telework, or who are not approved for ad hoc or situational telework, are granted Admin/Excused Absence leave for time of the closure of their government building.

VII. QUESTIONS

Refer question regarding this directive to telework.awa@fsis.usda.gov, or at (202) 720-0467.



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