

**Supervisor Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Telework, Leave, and Pay
for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

June 18, 2020

Introduction

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in this document are provided to assist National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) supervisors in responding to general questions regarding telework, leave, and pay in response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Important: This guidance may change in the future. NASA is waiting on further clarification from the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to determine if there are additional flexibilities available for employees. As information changes, the date at the top of the document will change as well, so you can know if any updates have occurred since the last time you viewed this document.

This document does not currently contain guidance on the expanded use of paid sick leave as outlined in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. As soon as guidance is received from OPM, this document will be updated to reflect those flexibilities.

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General Telework FAQs

1. What is Teleworking?

Telework is a work flexibility that allows an employee to perform their assigned duties at home or at another approved alternative worksite. An employee is expected to communicate with the supervisor any changes that will adversely affect the work performance, working conditions, or telework eligibility.

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2. What is considered voluntary telework?

Voluntary telework is when an eligible employee requests a set schedule to telework from an alternate location on a routine or situational basis. An eligible employee is one whose position is conducive for telework, has a NASA-issued computer, has Virtual Private Network (VPN) access, and whatever else is needed for telework. Eligibility does not equate to an entitlement for telework.

3. When is an employee considered ineligible for telework?

If there is no work or training available, or if an employee cannot work/train at an alternate worksite, the employee is considered telework ineligible.

4. What is considered mandatory telework?

Mandatory telework is when the Agency directs employees to telework at an alternative worksite, generally the employee's home. Mandatory telework is required during an emergency situation that causes a disruption of Government operations, including inclement weather or safety-related events. During an emergency, including a Pandemic Health Crisis, the Telework Program plays a vital role for the Agency's Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) by preserving essential Agency, Headquarters, and/or Center functions and providing an option for employees to continue working during times when they may be prevented from reporting to their regular worksite.

Note: There may be instances in which an employee's position/work is not conducive for teleworking or an employee does not have a Government-issued laptop. NASA will determine if weather and safety leave is authorized or other type of leave is more appropriate in these instances.

5. How do I know if an employee is telework ready?

Review the employee's telework eligibility status located in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) under the **Telework Status** section. The employee's eligibility is reflected.

6. What if an employee is not telework ready?

Review the employee's telework eligibility status located in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) under the **Telework Status** section. The employee's eligibility is reflected. If you have an employee who is coded as ineligible in WebTADS, you can take the following steps to make the employee telework eligible:

- Ensure the employee completes the mandatory telework training in the System for Administration, Training, and Educational Resources for NASA (SATERN) and/or other Center-specific training. The telework training course ID is HQ-TW-

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TTEM, and the course title is “Telework Training for Employees.” Follow your Center procedures if your Center has other required training.

- Coordinate with the employee to establish a Telework Agreement in WebTADS.

Note: Due to the severity of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), employees who are coded as ineligible for telework are allowed to telework since mandatory telework and/or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) have been implemented. There may be instances in which an employee’s position is not conducive for teleworking or an employee does not have a Government-issued laptop.

7. How does an employee complete a Telework Agreement?

After completing the required telework training in the System for Administration, Training, and Educational Resources for NASA (SATERN), an employee can establish a Telework Agreement in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS). For instructions you can provide to employees regarding how to establish a Telework Agreement in WebTADS:

- Visit the AAO Help Center at: <https://help.aao.nasa.gov/>.
- Ensure the drop-down menu shows the **WebTADS** option.
- Click the **Help for Employees** link.
- Click the **Establish, Modify or Opt-Out a Telework Agreement** link.

8. How should an employee code the timecard in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) for telework?

The employee must add the telework project code in WebTADS. The telework project code cannot be added if the employee is not currently telework ready, has not completed telework training, and/or has not been approved to telework. The following is a link to instructions on how to code telework on the timecard:
https://nasapeople.nasa.gov/coronavirus/how_to_add_telework_code_to_timecard.pdf.

9. How should an employee code the timecard in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) for telework if the employee is not telework ready or cannot charge to the telework code due to being ineligible under normal situations?

If there is mandatory telework or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) is enacted and employees are directed to telework, the employee must add TW in the remark section when adding a project to the timecard. Please reference the following guidance

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for additional information:

https://nasapeople.nasa.gov/coronavirus/coding_telework_in_webtads.pdf.

10. Can I require employees to provide a list of the work they are performing?

Supervisors should discuss the expectations of work performance, accessibility, and communication while in a telework status. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all employees, regardless of telework status, are treated the same for the purposes of job performance appraisals, work assignments, requirements, etc.

**Telework FAQs Specific to Coronavirus Disease 2019
(COVID-19)**

1. What are my employees' options if the Center is remaining OPEN with restricted access and Mandatory Telework has been directed?

Mandatory telework is when the Agency directs employees to telework. Mandatory telework is required during an emergency situation that causes a disruption of Government operations, including inclement weather or safety-related events. If employees are eligible to telework, employees must begin to telework. If an employee is telework ineligible, the employee should request weather and safety leave.

Note: Due to the severity of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), employees who are coded as ineligible for telework are allowed to telework since mandatory telework and/or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) have been implemented. There may be instances in which an employee's position/work is not conducive for teleworking or an employee does not have a Government-issued laptop. In those instances, you can approve weather and safety leave.

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2. What are my employees' options if the Center is remaining OPEN and NASA authorizes the use of unscheduled telework?

Unscheduled telework allows a supervisor to authorize eligible employees to perform work at an alternate location such as the employee's home. If the employee is eligible to telework and teleworking will not impact the mission, telework should be approved.

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3. What are my employees' options if the Center is closed due to COVID-19 and NO Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) is in place?

In this case, telework is mandatory. If employees are eligible to telework, employees must begin to telework. If no work or training can be identified for the employee, the employee would be considered telework ineligible and entitled to weather and safety leave.

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4. What are my employee's options if there is a Center closure or Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) have been implemented and I cannot find any work for an employee that is normally ineligible to telework?

If no work or training can be identified for the employee, the employee would be entitled to weather and safety leave. Before approving weather and safety leave, supervisors should look at alternative work assignments for which the employee has the necessary knowledge and skill to perform. Supervisors should also consider options such as training, reading books that are applicable to the employee's work, cleaning up files on computers, implementing process improvements, etc.

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5. What if the schools or daycares (child/adult) are closed due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

An employee may be allowed to work from home if children or dependents are present. Eligible employees may telework for any portion of the workday during which they are not directly engaged in caregiving. Supervisors should allow maximum work schedule flexibility when possible, including working outside of core hours and intermittent teleworking when caregiving duties interrupt an employee's workday. Employees should deduct any time spent providing direct care of a child or dependent from their total hours worked for the day. Employees whose caregiving duties interrupt telework may request up to 20 hours of excused leave (XLV) per pay period. Excused leave is not an entitlement, and each request should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

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Note: Direct care of a child, parent, or dependent is the time spent caring for an individual during which the employee cannot be reasonably expected to perform work. Examples of direct care include feeding a child, dressing a parent or child, etc.

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6. What if an employee who is telework ineligible and at a higher risk of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) requests to telework?

If there is a Center closure or mandatory telework, you may allow the employee to telework from home if there are portable duties or training that can be performed. You are encouraged to approve weather and safety leave for employees who are at a higher risk and are telework ineligible. Weather and safety leave would be appropriate due to a condition that prevents the employee or group of employees from safely traveling to or from or safely perform work at the normal duty location.

Note: Employees at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 are defined by the CDC as older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions such as Heart Disease, Diabetes, Lung Disease, etc. Additional information for those at a higher risk can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Higher Risk page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.

7. Can an employee who has performance and disciplinary issues be allowed to telework during an emergency situation like Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Supervisors who have employees with performance or disciplinary issues should contact their Servicing Human Resources Office to determine the employee's eligibility for telework.

8. Will an employee's duty location change while teleworking during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis?

The current situation is considered temporary and does not change an employee's duty location for pay purposes.

9. What should an employee do if the work equipment is not functioning properly while teleworking?

The employee should contact the Enterprise Service Desk (ESD) for assistance at 1-877-677-2123. If ESD is unable to correct the problem, the employee should contact the supervisor to determine if there is other work or training that can be completed without the use of the equipment. If the supervisor is unable to identify other work or training, the supervisor can authorize weather and safety leave.

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Leave FAQs

1. What leave options are available to employees who contract Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

If an employee contracts COVID-19, the same leave options are available as if the employee was ill due to another serious illness. The employee is entitled to use all available paid leave that they have accrued. This does not include weather and safety leave.

If an employee's accrued/paid leave balances are insufficient to cover the expected duration of the illness, the employee may be eligible to request Advanced Sick Leave (ASL), participate in the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) or if the employee is a member of the Voluntary Leave Bank Program (VLBP), request hours from the Leave Bank.

The NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) Leave Programs Team provides employees and supervisors with information about all leave options available to an employee based on the employee's personal circumstances. The NSSC Leave Programs Team is available to help employees and supervisors determine what type and how much leave is available to employees in the event employees or family members are impacted by COVID-19. If applicable, additional guidance will be provided to each employee on how to code timecards while receiving ASL and participating VLTP or VLBP. The NSSC Leave Programs Team can be reached at 1-877-677-2123. When calling this phone number, ask to speak with a Leave Programs Specialist.

2. What leave options are available to employees who have a family member that contracts Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

If an employee is caring for a family member who has or is symptomatic for COVID-19, the rules for leave fall under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). An employee is entitled to use up to 12 weeks (480 hours) of paid or unpaid leave during any 12-month period to care for a family member with a serious health condition. An employee may request unpaid time off or use any type of paid leave or other paid time off.

Consult with your Servicing Human Resources (HR) Office for additional leave guidance regarding FMLA.

For additional information on this topic, please refer to the OPM Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition Fact Sheet. To locate it:

- Visit the OPM Pay & Leave – Leave Administration page at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/>.
- Click the **Fact Sheets** tab.
- Click the **Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition** link.

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3. Can an employee telework if the employee is sick?

It depends. At the employee's request only, if the employee is sick, but not fully incapacitated, you may approve telework. However, if the employee requests sick leave because of illness, sick leave or other requested paid leave should be authorized. It is important that supervisors allow employees the necessary time off work to recover from this serious illness. There is currently no requirement for employees to provide medical documentation to support their sick leave request due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). If an employee contacts you to request sick leave, it should be approved. Telework is only an option if the employee requests to telework rather than take sick leave.

4. What leave is available to an employee who is not sick, but is quarantined/isolated/restricted movement and not telework ready?

Supervisors should grant weather and safety leave to employees who are quarantined and unable to telework. All weather and safety leave that is granted must be documented on the employee's timecard under the hour code type XLV61 with a comment on the timecard of "Coronavirus Observation".

Note: When mandatory telework is in effect, employees should be authorized weather and safety leave if they are not deemed telework ready. Being telework ready means the employee has the equipment necessary to conduct work and has work that can be performed at an alternative worksite.

5. What happens if an employee is not ill but is unable to work due to a dependent being quarantined/isolated?

If the dependent lives with the employee, the employee should be quarantined/isolated as well since the employee comes in direct contact with the dependent daily. It would be unreasonable to expect the dependent to be placed with another care provider when quarantined/isolated due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Eligible employees may telework for any portion of the workday during which they are not directly engaged in caregiving. If an employee's caregiving responsibilities interrupt the workday, the employee can request up to 20 hours of excused leave (XLV) per pay period to cover the time spent performing caregiving activities. Supervisors should allow maximum work schedule flexibility, when possible, before approving excused leave for this purpose. Work flexibility may include working outside of core hours and intermittent working.

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Note: Direct care of a child, parent, or dependent is the time spent caring for an individual during which the employee cannot be reasonably expected to perform work. Examples of direct care include feeding a child, dressing a parent or child, etc.

6. What options are available if an employee became infected with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) while in the performance of duty?

A Federal employee who contracts COVID-19 while in the performance of duty may be covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) for all related medical treatment and wage loss related to the condition. Employees claiming an injury due to contact with COVID-19 must provide a medical report from a qualified physician reflecting a positive test that fully explains the exposure, its relation to employment, and any related period of disability. Contact the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) Workers' Compensation Team at 1-877-677-2123 for information on filing a workers' compensation claim.

7. Do employees still need to provide medical documentation once they have been on sick leave for more than 3 days due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Supervisors may consider an employee's self-certification, regardless of the duration of the absence. Considering the quick transmission of COVID-19 and this year's flu, supervisors may, at their discretion, waive the requirement for employees to provide a medical note if absent from work more than 3 days. Given the limited resources the Nation is currently experiencing for medical care, supervisors are encouraged to waive this requirement.

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Pay FAQs

1. How does an employee code the timecard if weather and safety leave is approved?

Employees must code XLV61 on their timecard and indicate in the comment section, "Coronavirus Observation". If you have questions regarding the proper coding of XLV61, please contact the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) Customer Contact Center at 1- 877-677-2123 and request to speak to Payroll for assistance with coding the timecard.

2. What are the telework rules for overtime pay, holiday pay, night pay, etc.?

The rules for pay have not changed due to telework or Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

- Generally, if an employee is required to work overtime, the employee may receive:
 - Overtime pay.
 - Compensatory time off.
 - Credit hours.
- If an employee is required to work on a holiday during normal work hours, the employee is entitled to receive Holiday pay.
- If an employee is normally scheduled to work on Sundays, the employee is entitled to receive Sunday premium pay.
- If an employee is typically scheduled to work the night shift as part of the normal work schedule, the employee is entitled to receive night pay for the days the employee would have otherwise worked the night shift. This is not applicable if an employee is working night shift hours due to telework flexibilities implemented for COVID-19.
- When an employee is required to work/telework from home temporarily because of COVID-19, the locality rate or special rate will continue to be determined based on the location of the regular official worksite.

3. If an employee's personal situation causes a change to the employee's work schedule, will the employee be entitled to night pay?

You should consult with your Servicing Human Resources Office to evaluate entitlements to premium pay (e.g., night pay), scheduled and unscheduled overtime, and other compensation requirements. Additionally, a change in work schedules may require the Center to bargain with its labor unions, if applicable.

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4. Do supervisors need authorization to waive the biweekly limitation on premium pay for overtime work performed due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Yes. Center Directors (or designees) have sole discretion in determining that an employee is needed to perform work that is critical to the mission of the Agency. For any pay period where such a determination is made, covered employees will be paid under the annual maximum earnings limitation.

5. What if an employee expects to go into a Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Encourage employees to contact you as soon as possible to discuss leave options if they expect to exhaust their own personal leave. NASA understands that situations will arise that require a case-by-case determination regarding if approving weather and safety or other excused leave would be appropriate beyond the parameters that are outlined in the current guidance.

6. Are employees entitled to hazard or environmental differential pay during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic?

Hazard or environmental differential pay can be allowed when the employee is exposed to “virulent biologicals” only when the risk of exposure is directly associated with the performance of assigned duties. An employee cannot receive a hazard pay differential under the “virulent biologicals” category if exposure to a qualifying virus was not triggered by the performance of assigned duties.

The hazard pay differential cannot be paid to an employee who may come in contact with the virus or another similar virus through incidental exposure to the public or other employees who are ill rather than being exposed to the virus during the performance of assigned duties (e.g., as in the case of a poultry handler or healthcare worker). Also, the virus must be determined to be likely to cause serious disease or fatality for which protective devices do not afford complete protection.

NASA Reasonable Accommodations FAQs

1. For employees to have full access and be able to perform their job while full-time teleworking during Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), they may need help for a medical condition. What should be done?

Employees who have a medical condition that may be impacting their ability to perform the essential functions of their job should promptly contact any of the following:

- (1) A supervisor or manager in the individual’s chain of command.
- (2) Their Center Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO).
- (3) Any other individual designated by the Agency to accept such requests for assistance (e.g., the Center Disability Program Manager).

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An employee's request for assistance may constitute a request for a reasonable accommodation, subject to NASA Procedural Requirements (NPR) 3713.1, Reasonable Accommodations Procedures for Individuals with Disabilities, available at:

https://nodis3.gsfc.nasa.gov/displayDir.cfm?Internal_ID=N_PR_3713_001C_&page_name=main&search_term=Reasonable

2. If an employee makes a request for a reasonable accommodation, will the employee be required to disclose medical information, and will it remain private?

Generally, an employee requesting a reasonable accommodation for a disability will be asked to provide additional information or clarification, including supporting reasonable medical documentation. In some situations, such as those where the disability and/or the need for a reasonable accommodation is obvious or otherwise known, an employee may not be required to provide medical documentation.

Any individual at NASA who receives information in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation may only share that information with Agency officials that have a need to know the information. Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, medical information obtained in connection with the reasonable accommodation process must be kept confidential. All NASA employees or stakeholders associated with this process who obtain or receive such information are strictly bound by these confidentiality requirements and the Privacy Act of 1974.

3. What assistance do I need to provide to my employee with a disability during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic?

Please contact your Center Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Director or Center Disability Program Manager for assistance. Refer to NASA Procedural Requirements NPR 3713.1, Reasonable Accommodations Procedures for Individuals with Disabilities, available at:

https://nodis3.gsfc.nasa.gov/displayDir.cfm?Internal_ID=N_PR_3713_001C_&page_name=main&search_term=Reasonable.

4. What happens if a civil service employee is asked to continue to work onsite but does not want to take the personal risk?

There may be health concerns that are causing the employee to not want to take the personal risk of working onsite and they may or may not feel comfortable discussing those risks. Management should try to honor the employee's wishes and not force the employee to work if there is someone else who is willing to work onsite/can complete the work or the work can be completed via telework.

5. What happens if an employee is asked to continue working onsite because the work is critical or the employee is the only one able to perform the work and is needed to perform the mission?

If the employee does not have a health concern and management needs the employee onsite, management could direct this employee to perform critical/mission work. We

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advise managers to determine if flexibilities exist to protect the employee while still completing the mission. Managers should contact their Servicing Human Resources Office for guidance, if needed.

6. What would happen if an employee lives with someone who is high risk and the employee does not want to continue to work onsite to limit exposure?

Management should try to honor the employee's wishes and not force the employee to work if there is someone else who is willing to work onsite/can complete the work or the work can be completed via telework.

7. Where can I obtain additional information?

You may find guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) What You Should Know About the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and COVID-19 page at: <https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>.