

Advance Workplace Preparation for Emergency Situations

Managers are encouraged to meet with their employees in advance to discuss how work will continue during an emergency situation. The manager and employee should discuss the following topics.

Determine essential work functions.

Prioritize services and work to determine which functions would be critical to continuing business operations during an emergency situation.

- Create a list of the services and functions and list names of employees who can perform each function/service.
- Implement cross training for services and functions that are critical but do not have a number of employees who can perform them.
- Discuss how work might be temporarily reassigned so that employees could work from an alternate location, if needed.
- Discuss core hours when employees need to be available to work if they must telecommute.
- Discuss the possibility of assigning work shifts, if social distancing is implemented.

Ensure that employees are capable of working from home in advance.

- Make sure that employees have equipment at home that would allow them to continue critical functions during an emergency.
- Explore the use of VPN and Remote Desktop so that employees can access their work computers from home; perform setup in advance.

Discuss protocol for communicating with the office if employees are telecommuting.

Discuss the following questions:

- How should they check in – via phone, e-mail, etc.?
- How often should they check in with the office?
- What messages should be sent to officemates and/or customers to ensure continuation of service?

Discuss how you will notify each other if there is an emergency.

Emergencies may occur after working hours or during a time when others are out of the office. Here are some communication suggestions:

- Create a departmental contact list with each employee's phone number.
- If possible, make the list small enough to be placed in a wallet, and laminate the list for durability.
- On the other side of the list, create instructions that indicate who will call whom and how to stay in contact during an emergency. Note how frequently each employee should check for updates.
- Request that employees keep the contact list with them at all times.

In case of pandemic illness, establish regular schedules for frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces and high traffic areas.

This includes the following:

- Doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons
- Desks, tables, chairs, sofas
- Counters and surfaces in meeting rooms and offices
- Phones, keyboards, remote controls, and headphones that are shared frequently

For a list of frequently asked questions about telecommuting, see the [Emergency Telecommuting Arrangement FAQs](#) document.