



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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December 18, 2020

To: All Department Heads  
  
From: Fesia A. Davenport  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

## IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF EMERGENCY TELEWORK

Given the current surge of COVID-19 in Los Angeles County, **departments are directed to immediately implement emergency telework to the greatest extent possible to protect the health and safety of our employees.** This Emergency Telework Directive will remain in effect so long as the current COVID-19 surge lasts. Please note that this temporary directive **supersedes all departmental routine telework programs and pre-established reopening procedures.** This Emergency Telework Directive will be reassessed by the Chief Executive Office (CEO), in consultation with the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) in late January 2021.

Not all County positions or functions are suitable for telework. Some work simply can't be done remotely – this we know. However, a lot of work can be done remotely and virtually all departments are engaged in some amount of telework due to COVID-19. This directive calls upon departments to re-assess existing telework efforts. Department Heads should assess the essential business functions and services of their departments (as modified by COVID-19) and strive to ensure that only those staff required to maintain those functions and to provide those services are reporting to a County facility while these temporary measures are in place. The goal here is to minimize the number of people coming into the office during the surge.

DHR has established the attached *Los Angeles County Emergency Telework Protocols* (Protocols) for your use. These Protocols were developed in partnership with Departmental Chief Deputies, CEO, and central agencies to ensure the continuity of County operations in the current COVID-19 pandemic, as well as future emergencies. The Protocols offer guidance for the activation of emergency telework, criteria for assessing staff's suitability to telework during a temporary emergency response, and outlines each department's responsibility to incorporate Emergency Telework in its Continuity of Operations Plan. These Protocols are designed to cover a variety of

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divergent circumstances, will likely have to be tailored to each Department's unique circumstances, and are subject to revision based upon new information or changed circumstance.

Should your department need assistance with your IT infrastructure or have questions about maintaining security in accessing County systems remotely, please contact Bill Kehoe, Chief Information Officer, at [BKehoe@cio.lacounty.gov](mailto:BKehoe@cio.lacounty.gov) or speak with your Information Technology Unit or Departmental Information Security Officer.

If you have any questions regarding the emergency telework protocols, please contact Lisa M. Garrett, Director of Personnel, at (213) 974-2406 or [lgarrett@hr.lacounty.gov](mailto:lgarrett@hr.lacounty.gov), or Pamela Missett, Chief Deputy, DHR, at (213) 974-2451 or [pmisssett@hr.lacounty.gov](mailto:pmisssett@hr.lacounty.gov).

FAD:LMG:PAM:If

Attachment

c: Each Supervisor  
Chief Deputies  
Administrative Deputies  
Departmental Human Resources Managers  
Chief Information Office  
Office of Emergency Management

## EMERGENCY TELEWORK PROTOCOLS

### Telework in the County of Los Angeles

Telework or teleworking is the operational business practice of allowing employees to work from home or another remote location; when teleworking an employee performs his/her duties and responsibilities and other authorized activities from his/her approved telework location.

Established in 2008, the Los Angeles County Telework Program is governed by [Board Policy 9.090](#), which dictates the qualification, training, and approval criteria all teleworkers and their supervisors must follow to participate in the program. The Telework policy establishes the County's standard for all telework arrangements, and all aspects of this policy must be upheld in an individual department's telework program.

In the County of Los Angeles, each department has the authority to designate whether telework is suitable for their operations, and this decision is based on ensuring that the department can effectively and efficiently meet its business goals and objectives.

Examples of variables (not all inclusive) that may factor into the business decision of whether telework is supported are:

- Compatibility of the position's duties and responsibility with telework;
- Technological readiness of department:
  - Adaptability of workflows to a digital/electronic format,
  - Confidentiality of work product/documents,
  - Equipment for approved teleworkers to support performance,
  - Customer service considerations for the public and internal stakeholders; and
- Established metrics in the department's Employee Commute Reduction Plan with the Air Quality Management District to attain environmental and air quality goals.

### Emergency Telework in the County of Los Angeles

Emergency telework refers to the practice of assigning telework during a declared emergency for employees not already participating in routine telework. Emergency telework is used where practical and appropriate to ensure continuity of departmental operations and to safeguard the health and wellbeing of County employees and the public.

**This document outlines protocols for teleworking in an emergency.**

## **1. Purpose**

This is to set forth the guidelines for application of the Los Angeles County Emergency Telework Protocols. These emergency protocols, when activated, would supersede the department's established day-to-day telework policies and practices with the intent of supporting continuity of operations during a declared emergency, such as a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or public health crisis and safeguarding the health and wellbeing of County employees.

## **2. Activation of Emergency Telework Protocols**

### **Implementation of Emergency Telework in Anticipation of an Event**

When emergency events can be anticipated (i.e., evacuation due to fire or another event that gives warning), the department should notify all staff to take steps to be "telework ready." This includes the requirement that employees ensure they have access to all necessary equipment and documents to telework effectively. If an employee is unable to secure the equipment or tools needed to telework prior to an emergency event, or if the employee's job function does not generally align with telework, the employee must contact their immediate supervisor or manager as soon as possible to determine if there are any tasks, activities, or temporary alternate assignments that may be accomplished remotely.

Alternatively, in the event that a department deploy emergency telework, and an employee opts not to participate in emergency telework, they may request to use any available accrued benefits (e.g., paid sick leave, vacation time, part-pay sick, etc.) for the days they will not be working. Employees who are deemed essential to department operations that cannot be completed remotely may be required to continue to work from a designated County facility.

Employees participating in the emergency telework are expected to adhere to their standard work schedule (including breaks and meal periods), unless otherwise assigned by their supervisor or manager. All policies and procedures regarding requests to work overtime, time off, or related items, remain in place.

### **Implementation of Emergency Telework in a Sudden Emergency**

An emergency event for the purposes of this protocol includes natural disasters, acts of terrorism, civil unrest, pandemic health emergencies or other such events. During a pandemic, emergency telework can be used to slow the spread of disease by keeping face-to-face contact to a minimum and enforcing social distancing, while maintaining operations as close to routine as possible.

Emergency telework protocols may only be implemented during the occurrence of a declared local emergency and may go into effect upon the activation of a department's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). Emergency telework may only be used by County employees with management approval when enough duties can be performed from an approved worksite and the safety or health of employees would be compromised by reporting to their regular physical work location. Upon activation, the essential business functions of the department should be assessed to ensure that the maximum number of eligible employees are assigned to telework while maintaining continuity of operations.

***Emergency telework may not be approved for any other reason unrelated to an organizational emergency event.***

### **3. Suspension of Routine Telework Requirements in an Emergency**

When emergency telework protocols are activated, the following routine telework requirements will be immediately suspended to allow the greatest level of flexibility and to ensure that the maximum number of eligible staff can telework as needed:

- A. **Training** – Employees who have not previously completed the County Teleworker Training, Tele-manager Training, or the Telework Time-Code module will be allowed to begin emergency telework without delay, with the understanding that the training(s) will be completed on-line as soon as practicable.
- B. **Telework Agreement** – Employees who do not have a signed Telework Agreement on record will be permitted to begin emergency telework after receiving approval (i.e. verbal or written) from their manager, supervisor or department executive with the understanding that the Telework Agreement and related forms will be completed and signed and processed as soon as practicable.
- C. **Selection Criteria** – Employees with jobs that would not ordinarily qualify for routine telework due to the nature of the job function or other factors, may be assessed for emergency telework arrangements. Management should use flexibility when determining alternate assignments, as appropriate, that would allow the greatest number of employees to telework during emergency events, while maintaining critical County services.

***Emergency Telework may not be appropriate in the following instances:***

The nature of the employee's job is not conducive to telework (i.e. positions which provide critical services to the public such as law enforcement, medical providers, hospital custodial, food service worker or coroner staff).

- Services the client/public cannot be accessed by the public or client due to the client's inability to receive services electronically or where there are other barriers to service delivery.

- The department has no work-related assignments to provide the employee for completion off-site.
- The employee is reassigned as a Disaster Service Worker, and the assignment requires the employee to be physically on-site to discharge their duties.

#### **4. Termination of Emergency Telework**

Employees participating in emergency telework are to be informed by the department that emergency telework is ending, with confirmation of the date that they are to report back to the worksite, and additional guidance if any, regarding any protocols for supporting their return to the physical workplace.

The decision to resume routine business operations should be made in consultation with the CEO's Office of Emergency Management, the Department of Human Resources, and the Office of the County Counsel, where appropriate.

#### **5. Emergency Telework in Departmental Continuity of Operations Plans**

All County departments are to incorporate telework in their COOP. Employees in positions designated by departments as fulfilling mission critical functions roles should be allowed telework if practicable in emergency events where facilities are closed or are otherwise inaccessible.

The COOP should address which positions are excluded from consideration for participation in emergency telework due to the nature or function of the positions.

During non-emergency periods, departments should ensure that eligible staff have completed the required telework training and that all approved teleworkers and their supervisors understand how emergency telework is implemented during a declared emergency. In addition, Departments should proactively ensure that teleworkers have the appropriate hardware/resources and access to assume telework at a moment's notice. Employees are "telework ready" when they have an approved telework agreement, approved telework space, information technology items needed to telework, enough quantity of work, and access to work materials.

#### **6. Guidance and Support**

DHR is available to provide consultation and support in the development of a department's emergency telework protocols, and to troubleshoot any issues or address concerns related to this topic.