

# COVID-19 UPDATE

TELECOMMUTING

## MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT CEO/HR DIRECTOR

The County responded quickly to the need to move employees out of the workplace to remote work locations. All departments have participated in telecommuting to protect employees, both those who remain in the workplace and those who have been assigned to work from home.

However, we did it so quickly there wasn't much time to plan or determine how to best measure and manage the performance of work being done remotely, and teams are using various combinations of County communication resources and work tools.

The purpose of this Telecommuting Bulletin is to support both the employees and managers in this exigent telecommuting environment.

We offer these tips and resources to assist everyone with being successful in the telecommuting world.

As always, HR is available to consult with you on any questions or concerns you may have.

  
BRENDA DIEDERICHS

Successful public service continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic required that we identify and implement new methods for service delivery and adapt to the change as seamlessly as possible. One of the methods Riverside County implemented quickly was telecommuting. Telecommuting is a great option to continue to provide the exceptional service our community needs, especially during this crisis, while keeping ourselves safe and healthy. In addition, not having to commute saves money and time and can actually make you happier!

Employees who telecommute often learn that working remotely is different than they expected and that it requires specific skills and habits. There are hundreds of tricks and tips that are currently being highlighted in media due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are some common tips that will help you get to work while at home.

**1. Define your workspace.** It can be easy to sit on the sofa with your laptop and expect to get work done. Experienced teleworkers will tell you they tried that, and it simply doesn't work. Establishing a workspace, even if it is your kitchen table, gives your brain a cue that it is time for work and not play.

## **2. Master the basics.**

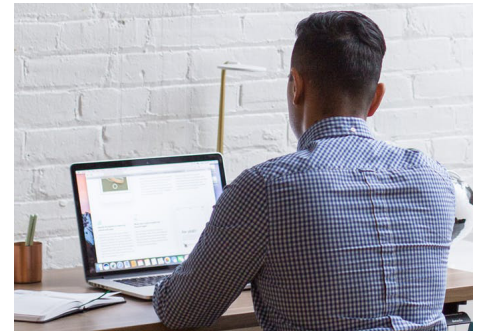
- Add your telecommute schedule to your email signature line.
- Set up call forwarding.
- Know how to access the VPN in order to access your files and documents.
- Use Skype or Jabber to stay connected to colleagues and your manager/supervisor.

- Plan for video calls/meetings by making sure you know how to access the meetings online, what audio source you'll use most effectively and how to mute/unmute, and what background your colleagues may be able to see behind you.

**3. Get dressed and follow your routine.** Getting into a work mindset at home can require you to do many things, including getting dressed for the day and following your normal morning routine. Dressing casually is definitely a perk of working at home but getting "ready for work" is a daily ritual that many telecommuters swear by. Not only does this help you get in the right mindset, but it can also be a great reminder to those around you that you are working and not enjoying a day off.

**4. Establish daily goals and share your progress.** Workdays pass amazingly quick without the comings and goings of an office to break things up or influence what you do next. Start each day by writing down what you need to achieve and then track your progress. SharePoint is a great tool for tracking work and projects. It also helps keep everyone updated on the status of all projects and assignments that the team is working on.

**5. Eliminate distractions.** Working from home can mean family members, pets, and/or a favorite hobby are only a few feet away. For family members, it may be helpful to post your working hours and create a traffic signal outside the door in the room you are working in. Red would indicate "Do Not Disturb". Yellow would indicate



"Check Before Interrupting". The green "light" would indicate "Available". Pets often need a closed door to keep them away. However, studies have shown pets provide comfort and lowers anxiety, so they may be a welcomed co-worker for many of you.

**6. Stay connected.** Telecommuting doesn't have to mean that those short check-ins that happen with co-workers in the elevator, or with your boss while passing between meetings, don't have to occur. Keeping the lines of communication open not only helps keep everyone in the know about your work and team projects, but it also assists with our social well-being. Take advantage of the many ways we have to stay connected today, while maintaining our physical distance.

The Learning and Organizational Development Team is here to assist you with your learning and development needs. Visit our website at <https://corlearning.rc-hr.com> or <https://esp.rc-hr.com>. Visit your [Learning and Organizational Development Learning Library](#) and search "Virtual Teams", "Staying Organized", or a number of other related topics for a variety of resources related to telecommuting for both managers and employees. Once your search list is provided, be sure to click on the tabs to access courses, books, videos, and resources.

Being safe and healthy has taken on a whole new focus as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to continue providing services to our internal and external customers we must remain flexible. The recent increase in telecommuting is a direct result of our flexibility. Regardless of where we conduct our business the mission should always be to do so in the safest and most healthful way possible. Fortunately, many of the safety precautions and ergonomic principles we implement at our traditional office spaces are transferable to our home office. This provides the opportunity to continue offering our services and being productive while we maintain an “injury prevention” state of mind. The Safety Office is available to assist with safety and ergonomic related questions – call 951-955-3520.

The following checklists will provide guidance on maintaining a safe and healthful workplace at home.

#### **WORKSPACE SAFETY**

- ✓ Telecommuter has a separate, clearly defined workspace that is kept clean and orderly.
- ✓ The work area is adequately illuminated with lighting.
- ✓ The work area is well ventilated and heated.
- ✓ Exits are free from obstruction.
- ✓ Power strips with surge protection are being utilized for computers, fax machines, and printers (extension cords are not recommended).
- ✓ Electrical enclosures (switches, outlets, receptacles, and junction boxes) have tight fittings covers or plates.
- ✓ All electrical equipment is free

of recognized hazards (frayed wires, bare conductors, loose wires, and exposed wires).

- ✓ The work area is free of trip and fall hazards (loose carpet/rugs, cords, toys, etc.).
- ✓ Potentially hazardous chemicals are not stored, in, or around, the work area.

#### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

- ✓ There is a smoke and carbon monoxide detector near the work area; is in working order; and will be tested periodically.
- ✓ There is a portable fire extinguisher which is rated for A, B, C fires near the work area and is fully charged.
- ✓ A first aid kit is easily accessible and periodically inspected and replenished as needed.

#### **ERGONOMICS**

Desk, chair, computer, and other necessary equipment are in good condition, of appropriate design and arranged so that:

- ✓ Neck and shoulders (ear and shoulder in alignment) are not stooped to view the task.
- ✓ Back/lumbar is adequately supported.
- ✓ Feet are on the floor or fully supported by a footrest.
- ✓ Wrists are straight when keying and there is space to rest arms when not keying.
- ✓ There is no glare on the computer screen.
- ✓ Work can be performed without eye strain.
- ✓ When doing extensive computer work (data entry, reading monitor) for long periods of time incorporate mini breaks (5 minutes) before you feel fatigue.

#### **Additional Safety Resources**

[Riverside County Safety Division Website – Ergonomics Link](#)  
[Standard Safety Operations Manual – Document Number 1001 General Safety Rules](#)  
[Standard Safety Operations Manual – Document Number 201 Policy All Employees](#)

#### **Additional Resources for Employees**

[Working from Home Guide](#)  
[Get More Done: 18 Tips for Telecommuters](#)  
[COVID-19: Remote Work Guidelines for Employees](#)  
[Top 13 Tips to Work at Home Amid Coronavirus Concerns](#)  
[A Parent’s Guide to Working from Home With Kids](#)  
[Berkeley: Tools to Be Successful While Working Remotely](#)  
[Staying Focused When You’re Working From Home: Deal With Distractions to Get Everything Done](#)  
[Ergonomics](#)  
[Time Management: Working from Home](#)

#### **Additional Resources for Managers**

[Managing Remote Employees Guide](#)  
[Managing People at a Distance](#)  
[Managing Remote Workers](#)  
[5 Habits of High-Functioning Virtual Teams](#)  
[The New Rules for Remote Work: Pandemic Edition](#)  
[20 Questions to Ask Instead of “How are you doing right now?”](#)  
[Remote Work Trends to Guide High Performance During COVID-19](#)  
[A Time to Lead with Purpose and Humanity](#)  
[How to Keep Remote Worker Wellbeing High](#)