



# Best Practices: Safety When Working from Home

Many organizations are transitioning to remote-work arrangements in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many, this is becoming our “new normal”. But how do you stay safe, productive and organized when you live where you work? Here are a few tips:

- **Set up a safe workspace that works for you.** Find an area in your home where you can work that is quiet, free from interruptions and has good lighting. Inspect your work area for hazards, and ensure the area is tidy and well-organized. Set up your workstation ergonomically. Your chair monitor and keyboard should be arranged so that you keep your body in a neutral position. Just as you would at the office, take frequent breaks and varying your tasks. Just like at the worksite, follow all safety protocols while working at home. Ensure electrical equipment is inspected and maintained free from damage, avoid using power strips for fans and space heaters, and keep your workspace tidy. You'll want a nice background for those video conference calls anyway, right?
- **Get up. Get Dressed. Get to Work.** Prepare for your workday just as you normally would. You don't have a commute when you work from home, so you have a little while longer to get ready, get your breakfast and get the day started. Keep in mind, while you may be working from home, you're not on vacation. You are working. While you may not have to dress for the office, showing up to a video chat in your bathrobe and pajamas may not reflect well on your organization. Make sure you know what your employer's expectations are when it comes to dress code while working from home.
- **Connect with colleagues.** Working from home may mean less interaction with your friends and co-workers and more interaction with your spouse, children and pets. But it doesn't mean you can't connect in other ways. Scheduling regular video chats or meetings is a fantastic way to keep connected with your team and workmates. If you don't have video chat capabilities, regular phone calls can also keep you in contact with your remote colleagues. You can even schedule virtual coffee breaks or take a virtual walk to maintain a sense of camaraderie and connection with your team. Avoid distractions during your workday. This may be particularly hard if your children are also learning from home.
- **Be prepared for an emergency.** Severe weather season is here, and employees working from home should be prepared for any emergency that may arise. Employees will need to monitor severe weather and have an alert mechanism for any type of emergency, not just severe weather. Smoke detectors, CO2 monitors, and NOAA weather radios are all important elements of an emergency action plan. Having a well-stocked first aid kit, and emergency supplies, such as food water, and other supplies is essential.
- **Make sure you have the tools and resources you need to be productive & protect your company's data.** A crucial element of working from home is making sure you have the equipment and tools needed to do your job. This includes laptops or PC's/monitors, printers, and other computer related devices. A strong internet connection is also essential. Remote workers may have their work phones forwarded to their cellphone or home phone. Using video conferencing is a great way to make sure important meetings are not missed and embrace instant messaging tools that can help with short, quick communications between you and your colleagues. Employees will also need to evaluate their internet security. Wi-Fi systems used at home should be protected with a strong password, and staff may need to make sure they take home all their passcodes and log in information for the websites and systems they are required to access.
- **Understand your employer's expectations.** Working from home may mean a shift in how you work and interact with your coworkers and supervisor. Connect with your manager to understand remote work policy and expectations. Is working your normal schedule required? Are you able to adjust your hours based on needs at home? Does your employer expect you to be on call 24/7? Getting answers to these questions upfront will help alleviate issues and uncertainties down the road.

For more information on what employers need to know about COVID-19, visit our website at [www.oksafety.org/articlaee/show/19/](http://www.oksafety.org/articlaee/show/19/)

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