

7.14 TELEWORKING

Teleworking is the practice of working at home or away from an employee's assigned main office location. Teleworking is not a benefit or an entitlement. It is a voluntary alternative work arrangement intended to enhance productivity, creativity, employee satisfaction and/or reduce operating costs. Uniformed public safety personnel are not eligible for telework. Telework must be approved by a supervisor. Written approval must be documented using the Gaston County Telework Agreement.

7.14.1 Definitions

7.14.1 Telework

Telework is a work arrangement that allows an employee to perform work, during any part of their authorized schedule, at an approved remote work location. This does not include work done while on official travel. Telework is an alternative method of meeting the needs of the County and will not be available in all occupational job classes and/or positions.

7.14.2 Regular Telework

Telework that occurs on a regularly agreed upon schedule.

7.14.3 Situational Telework

Telework that is approved on a case by case basis, or that is not part of a Regular Telework schedule. Instances in which Situational Telework may be approved include but are not limited to: operational need, weather closings, natural and man made disasters/emergencies; employee safety; special work assignments; or in order to maximize output on days when an employee's availability is impacted by personal appointments/responsibilities.

7.14.4 Teleworker

A Teleworker is an eligible employee who has been approved to work from a remote work location. The Teleworker performs the normal duties and responsibilities of his/her position from the remote work location.

7.14.5 Eligible Position

An eligible position is a job class and/or position determined by a department director to be eligible for Telework. Probationary employees in eligible positions may be allowed to Telework at the discretion of their department director or designee.

7.14.6 Remote Work Location

A worksite approved by the Teleworker's Manager other than the Teleworker's main office, such as the Teleworker's residence.

7.14.7 Main Office

The Teleworker's primary workspace in the County offices.

7.15 Teleworker Responsibilities

Employee participation in Telework is strictly voluntary. Telework is an employee privilege and is not an employee right.

An employee who participates in Telework must comply with all State and Federal laws, County policies and procedures including, but not limited to the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Occupational Safety and Health act, those regarding confidentiality; disclosure and security of information, conflict of interest; EEO, workplace conduct and information technology.

The Teleworker is responsible for establishing and maintaining an adequate and safe work space that is conducive to working. The employee agrees to designate a workspace within employee's remote location for placement and installation of equipment to be used while teleworking. The county reserves the right to inspect the designated work space during working hours to ensure the site is safe and free from hazards.

Unless equipment is provided by the County, the Teleworker is responsible for the purchase, installation, configuration, and maintenance of all equipment and services needed to Telework. Equipment such as computer, mobile computing device(s), standard software, printer, telephone, mobile phone, cellular service, internet connection, video conferencing equipment, desk and chair will be needed to telework. The County shall not be responsible for the purchase, maintenance, repair, or operational costs of any such equipment.

All equipment assigned by the County for the purpose of performing the job duties as agreed is to be maintained in good working condition and used only for performing job responsibilities. Equipment in need of repair shall be brought to the County for service. Upon resignation or termination of the telework agreement, the teleworker shall return the equipment in good working order and in comparable condition as when assigned.

The Teleworker is responsible for providing a quality, high-speed internet connection at their expense.

The Teleworker is responsible for the safety and security of County equipment, software, data, and supplies at the remote work location. This includes maintaining data security and confidentiality to the same degree maintained by the County. The Teleworker may not duplicate County-owned software.

County equipment and software is to be used for County-related purposes only.

Teleworking employees must have an operational phone so as to be readily available by phone and email during the agreed upon work hours. A teleworker whose normal duties include responding to emails and phone is expected to continue to respond while Teleworking.

The Teleworker must be prepared to come in to the main office for meetings, trainings or other official business as required within one hour of being called. Advance notice will be given to the employee whenever possible. Teleworkers will not be reimbursed for trips between their home and work.

Teleworkers will be responsible for their own office furniture.

Teleworkers are expected to obtain necessary office supplies when they are in the main office. They will not be reimbursed for supplies readily available at the main office.

7.16. Conditions of Employment

All employee responsibilities and conditions (i.e., compensation, benefits, vacation time, overtime, rights, privileges, and disciplinary procedures) apply at the teleworking site.

Worker's Compensation liability will be limited to work-related injuries that occur in the remote work location work space. Worker's Compensation injuries must be reported to the employee's supervisor. Worker's Compensation claims are subject to review and investigation by the Risk Manager, who reserves the right to inspect home workspaces following any reported on-the-job injury.

A Teleworker's job responsibilities will not change. The Teleworker's supervisor may require the Teleworker to submit regular status reports or other information to help evaluate work performance. A decline in work performance or a decline in service to internal or external customers may result in adjustments to the Telework schedule or termination of the ability to telework. A Teleworker will be held to the same performance evaluation standards as other employees in the County who do not Telework.

When the employee's main office is closed due to weather or other emergency, the teleworker will be expected to follow their normal work schedule if working from their remote work location. If an emergency such as loss of power affects the teleworker's remote work location for a major portion of the day, the employee may be required to report to the main office or use annual leave.

Teleworkers by virtue of their regular absence from the main office may forfeit their assigned office space and may share space with another employee or utilize co-work space provided by the County.

The County has the right to refuse to make Telework available to any employee.

The County has the right to terminate the Telework Agreement in writing within 10 working days notice to the Teleworker.

A Teleworker has the right to terminate the Telework Agreement in writing within 10 working days notice to their Manager.

For non-exempt employees, overtime must be approved in advance in accordance with Gaston County's overtime policy. Teleworkers must receive supervisory approval prior to working beyond their normal hours of duty. Failure to obtain supervisory approval may result in the termination of the Telework Agreement and possible disciplinary action.