



REMOTE WORK POLICY

Adopted by the City of Big Lake on October 26, 2022 - pending CC approval

Purpose

The City of Big Lake is committed to providing excellent customer service for our residents, as well as attracting and retaining critical employee talent, increasing productivity and efficiency and saving on workspace and costs. A remote work policy provides these benefits to the city and is hereby adopted according to the guidelines below.

This policy governs the practice of working remotely from locations other than a city facility, including an employee's home. Remote work should not adversely affect other operational needs of the City. It is voluntary for the employee and at the sole discretion of management.

General Guidelines

Remote work as defined for this policy includes:

- Working all scheduled hours off-site, or
- Working some scheduled hours off-site and some on city premises.

Regardless of location, a remote worker remains responsible for all job duties, responsibilities and obligations associated with their position, even if such duties require the employee to come into a city facility while performing work remotely. Employees and supervisors should seek to find solutions to maximize benefit to the city and to the employee.

All City employees who meet the eligibility criteria will be considered for remote work on a case-by-case basis, where creative work arrangements have been shown to accomplish both work and personal goals, and meet the criteria and guidelines set forth below. Remote schedules may need to change to accommodate the needs of the city or when employee job duties change.

When making the decision to approve remote work, supervisors and the City Administrator will consider the following guidelines:

- The remote work arrangement must be set in advance and approved by the supervisor and the City Administrator.
- Remote work requires the same focus on job duties as if the employee were in the office; constant interruptions from household members, pets or other distractions may disqualify an employee from remote work.
- There must be adequate department coverage during all standard hours.
- There must be no adverse impact on internal or external customers.
- There must be no known safety issues associated with working remotely.
- There must not be any known security issues with technology or otherwise, in order to protect nonpublic government data.
- Employees working under a Performance Improvement Plan are not eligible for remote work.



- The City of Big Lake can use electronic means such as Teams, Skype, Zoom, etc to facilitate communication with both internal and external customers.
 - Internal and external customers must be given direction on whom to contact in the employee's absence if the employee is not available during all business hours.
- The schedule must not result in additional overtime for the employee or co-workers.
- The employee will receive no more than eight hours of holiday pay for each city holiday.
- The employee will not be allowed to work outside the State of Minnesota.
- The supervisor or City Administrator may end the remote work arrangement at any time, with at least a fifteen day (15) notice to the employee.

Remote work arrangements may vary depending on the position and department. Supervisors are responsible for determining the work schedules within their departments, subject to the approval of the City Administrator. Because the primary focus is serving the needs of the customers, it is important to realize remote work arrangements may not be possible for some positions.

Employees and supervisors should also consider various types of scheduling options for efficiency and productivity, including:

- Entire weeks in the office or working remotely
- Certain days in the office; remaining days working remotely
- Whether to have entire teams of employees in the office on the same day each week or at the beginning of each month

It's also important for the supervisor to consider perceptions of fairness among team members. For example, allowing one employee to work remotely every Friday may be perceived as unfair by other members of the team.

A remote work agreement is included in this policy as Appendix A. It is to be completed and signed by the City Administrator and the employee prior to beginning the remote work.

Eligibility for Flexibility in the Place of Work

Individuals requesting remote work arrangements must be employed with the City for a minimum of one (1) months of continuous, regular employment and be successfully performing their job duties, as determined with supervisor input. However, this requirement can be changed based on recommendations from the supervisor and approved by the City Administrator.

There may be additional considerations when an employee requests remote work as a reasonable accommodation and the city will consider those requests on a case by case basis.

Supervision and Performance Evaluation

For employees who are working remotely at least half of their schedule, supervisors must hold regular meetings to discuss work progress and issues for the first three months. These meetings can be conducted by phone, virtual computer technology or in person. Evaluation of remote worker



performance beyond the initial three months will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office.

If work performance declines or becomes unsatisfactory, the remote work arrangement may be terminated at the discretion of the city.

Work Hours, Calendars and Meetings

The employee and supervisor will agree on the number of days of remote work that will be allowed each week, the work schedule the employee will customarily maintain, and the manner and frequency of communication. The employee agrees to be accessible by phone, virtual computer software or email within a reasonable time period during the agreed upon work schedule. Depending on the employee's position and the needs of the City, the work schedule may include core hours during which the employee must be available or the schedule can include greater flexibility for the employee to work outside the city's normal business hours.

Remote work hours are not to be used for personal activities such as running errands or as a substitute for daycare.

Remote workers who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the City. Such employees will be held to a higher standard of compliance than office-based employees due to the nature of the work arrangement. Hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week, will require advance approval of the supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in termination of the remote work arrangement.

Remote workers who are exempt from the overtime requirements of the FLSA must follow the City's normal payroll and timekeeping policies and are generally accountable for their normal work week hours (e.g., for most full time employees that will be at least 40 hours/week).¹

All remote workers must use sick, vacation or compensatory time off as needed to cover periods of time off, following the city's normal paid leave policies.

Remote workers must attend all required meetings, including those which normally would be held on a remote workday, and are also responsible for obtaining information from optional meetings when such meetings impact their work with the city. Supervisors are responsible for setting expectations for their work teams regarding whether meeting attendance will be in-person, remote or a combination, considering these guidelines:

- Meetings of a sensitive, highly interactive, or complex nature are best held entirely in-person (e.g., brainstorming, troubleshooting, project "kick-off" meetings, performance reviews, disciplinary meetings).
- Allowing some workers to attend remotely and others to attend in-person could result in perceptions of unfairness or in some employees missing out on key information (such as

¹ https://www.osa.state.mn.us/media/01rlhhs0/employeetimekeepingproc_0808_statement.pdf



when the in-person staff continue to discuss the topic after remote workers log off). Supervisors need to be prepared to address these issues.

- In-person business meetings with others cannot be held at an employee's home.

Work Environment and Technology

For employees working remotely on a routine basis, the employee must establish an appropriate work environment to avoid problems associated with safety or poor ergonomics (see Appendix A for a diagram of an ergonomic work station). The City will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup of the employee's remote office such as remodeling, furniture, lighting, repairs, or modifications to the office space. Employees will be offered appropriate guidance in setting up a workstation designed for safe, comfortable work.

The City will supply the employee with the appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) for their assigned job responsibilities. The organization will also reimburse the employee for all appropriate business-related expenses; however, the employee may be required to come into the office in order to perform some duties such as mailing, scanning and photocopying.

The City will not provide reserved office space for remote workers who remote entirely from home but need to come into the office on an occasional basis.

City Employment Policy and Benefits Coverage

The City's normal policies and procedures (for example, computer use, data practices, respectful workplace, outside employment, etc.) apply to employees working remotely. Employees should ask their supervisors if they have any questions about whether or how a particular city policy applies to a remote work environment.

An employee working remotely is generally covered by the City's Workers' Compensation insurance while acting in the course and scope of employment and must report any injury to their supervisor as soon as possible.

Office Ergonomics Guide Sheet

You may not be aware of it, but over time, working at your computer may be needlessly overstressing parts of your body. Sore muscles, eyestrain, tension and fatigue could be reduced by modifying your workstation.

The diagram below is an overview of an ergonomic workstation for a computer user. Ideally you should position your work surfaces and computer accessories to fit you after you are first sitting properly in your ergonomically adjusted chair.

