



# Employer Telework Case Study

## Employer

United States Nuclear  
Regulatory Commission

## Contact

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## Background

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was created by Congress in 1974 as an independent agency to regulate the commercial nuclear industry to protect public health and safety against radiation hazards from industries that use radioactive material.

The NRC has over 4,000 employees located at headquarters in Rockville, Md.,

four regional offices and 65 nuclear plant sites.

Nuclear safety is at the core of all the agency's work in licensing, oversight, inspection, enforcement, research, and emergency response.

## The Telework Experience

NRC's telework program began in 1997 to allow employees to work away from the traditional office and provide a practical solution to environmental and other quality of life issues. Allowing employees to telework also helped address work life challenges.

After a period, the NRC has recognized a number of benefits from telework. It helped reduce employee stress, provided freedom from office distractions, and saved time and money by reducing commuting costs.

NRC offers employees three options for telework: 1) Fixed Schedule, 2) Project Based, and 3) Special Circumstances.

### Fixed Schedule Telework

Fixed telework arrangements allow employees to telework on a regular schedule. Employees may telework one to

five days per week. Employees under fixed telework arrangements can work from home or from one of the telework centers available in the Washington Metropolitan area.

### **Project Based Telework**

An employee may be approved by their supervisor to telework on a project basis for a specified project to be completed within a short period of time at home or telework center. This option is usually for a project covering a few hours or a few days.

### **Special Circumstances Work at Home**

Employees who are incapacitated or who face a significant hardship may be approved to work at home continuously or intermittently during their period of incapacitation or hardship.

### **Telework in General**

Telework is also a critical part of NRC's Continuity of Operations planning. Critical positions have been identified that are required to be available during a pandemic or other type of emergency.

All requests to telework must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Employees submit the appropriate documentation based on the type of telework requested and the duration of the agreement.

New employees are given information about NRC's telework program at orientation. The Office of Human Resources meets annually with the office and regional telework coordinators and briefs them on legislation, policies, procedures and other issues related to the program.

NRC does not provide any equipment, computers, Internet access or cellphone coverage. These costs are the responsibility of the teleworker.

In order to access the NRC intranet, teleworkers are provided with Citrix Online remote access software. The license fees are funded by NRC.

Flexible work schedules are also available at NRC allowing employees to start and end their workdays earlier or later, enabling them to miss peak-commute hours and/or address personal needs.

## **Program Participation**

As of January 2010, 17% of NRC's work force was participating in the telework program. A small number of employees are ineligible to participate in the telework program because their job-tasks are not portable. This includes those employees whose duties require, on a daily basis, direct handling of secure materials or on-site activity that cannot be performed remotely, such as face-to-face personal contact or other duties which require that the employee be onsite.

Participation in NRC's telework program has continued to expand. Since 2007, the number of employees who telework has steadily increased.

## **Challenges and Investment**

While most of NRC's managers actively support the telework program, there are some who are resistant to change or not as

supportive of a telework environment because they feel that they need to see their employees in order to ensure they are working. NRC addresses this challenge by continually educating managers and employees about the benefits and merits of the program.

## Program Outlook

Recently, NRC successfully negotiated the telework program with the National Treasury Employees Union and from this effort the agency expects to see the numbers grow.

NRC's telework program is periodically communicated through the Intranet website, posters and in-office communications (emails to the coordinators, annual telework coordinators' meeting) "The Teleworker" magazine is distributed to the telework coordinators in each office to keep them abreast of activities and developments in other government agencies and private companies. Providing this information helps to increase the coordinators knowledge which they then share with managers and employees.

In 2003, the Partnership for Public Service and the American University Institute for the Study of Public Policy began conducting the "Best Places to Work" survey of Federal agencies. For three consecutive years, 2007, 2008, and 2009, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been the top-rated large agency. The NRC's telework program is one of the key contributors to the agency's ranking because of the flexibility and benefits provided by the telework program, the agency expects the program to continue to grow.

## Most Helpful Resources

NRC provides a direct link on its internal website to the Office of Personnel Management's telework website where employees can find relevant information, Federal telework updates and links to online training.

The NRC has a dedicated Telework Coordinator who advises employees and managers on the program. The Telework Exchange is also a good resource that provides useful information and announces telework conferences that are attended by NRC managers and staff.

## Success Tips

We have found that the most important factor for success is to obtain top level management support for the telework program. Sufficient IT resources and support are also critical in ensuring a smooth transition to a remote work arrangement and continued productivity and collaboration with employees in the office.

Developing appropriate communication tools and opportunities to market the program are also keys to a successful program

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