Policies and Procedures

IN-OFFICE AND TELEWORK ARRANGEMENTS

Effective Date of Policy: 3-3-2025	Next Scheduled Review: 3-3-2027
Last Reviewed: NEW	Policy Number: OCC-01A.1
Replaced Policy OCC-01A	Replaces Policy Number: OCC-01A
Approved: Trey Lam / Commission	Approval Date: 3-3-2025

Reference: 62 O.S. §§ 34.11.7

A. Purpose

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (Commission) is committed to successfully transitioning full-time employees back to an in-office work environment. This policy establishes expectations for in-office work and outlines limited exceptions for teleworking, in compliance with Executive Order 2024-29.

B. Policy

In-office work is the standard arrangement for all full-time positions, except when performing fieldwork or while on approved work travel. This approach fosters collaboration and strengthens our workplace community.

Telework is defined as work performed away from an employee's designated in-office workstation that does not involve field duties or time spent in travel status. Telework is **not** an employee right, and this policy does not create any entitlement to telework. Instead, telework is a privilege that may be granted on a case-by-case basis to qualifying employees based on individual circumstances and project requirements and must be properly documented and authorized.

Exceptions to full-time, in-office work may be granted in the following limited situations:

Contingent Telework

- Contingent telework is a rare and temporary circumstance granted only when no suitable office space is available. If office space within a reasonable commuting distance is at full capacity and acquiring additional space would result in extra costs, or if existing office space becomes temporarily unavailable, an employee may be assigned contingent telework until a workspace is secured.
- Contingent telework is not employee-initiated. Supervisors will inform employees if it becomes necessary.

Medical Telework

- Medical telework is a temporary work-from-home arrangement, either full- or part-time, supported by physician documentation. It applies to employees recovering from injury, surgery, prolonged illness, or a communicable disease that does not impair their ability to perform their regular job

duties remotely at Commission standards. While medical telework may be full-time for a period, it is not intended to be a permanent arrangement.

- Employees must request medical telework, which will be evaluated and approved on a case-by-case basis by their supervisor upon consideration of all physician-documented limitations and restrictions.
- Medical telework also applies to employees utilizing approved Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for themselves or to care for a family member with a serious health condition while still being able to perform some of their regular work duties remotely. This includes the intermittent use of FMLA leave.

Emergency Telework

- Emergency telework allows employees to work from home or other locations during crises such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, facility disruptions, or pandemic health emergencies. It is a critical tool for ensuring the agency continues providing essential conservation and public safety services.

- In an emergency, employees may be required or requested to telework on short notice as directed by the Commission. Such directives will be based on guidance from state officials or authorized by the Commission's Executive Director.

  Office Closures Due to Inclement Weather

  - When the Department of Public Safety authorizes a reduction of services and an employee's primary office is temporarily closed due to inclement weather, non-essential Commission employees shall receive administrative leave.

  - **Requests:** An employees may request supervisor approval, in writing, to telework during an inclement weather closure, but they must adjust their workweek schedule accordingly. **Overtime or compensatory time will not be granted** unless an unusual circumstance is approved by the Executive Director.

Situational Telework

- Situational telework, also referred to as episodic, intermittent, unscheduled, or ad-hoc telework, may be approved in **limited and infrequent** circumstances when an employee is able to perform their duties at Commission standards but must work from a telework location.
- This type of telework must be **requested by the employee,** preferably in writing, and will be **evaluated, approved, and documented on a case-by-case basis** by the employee's supervisor. Situational telework may include:

  - **Working outside normal business hours** for special projects or other assignments.
  - **Temporary personal obligations** that require telework but do not prevent the employee from completing their work, such as:
    - Caring for a sick child or family member without alternative care.
    - A scheduled residential service technician appointment.
    - An unexpected school closure.
    - A contagious illness or health issue that does not prevent the employee from meeting Commission work standards.

- Situational telework is not a routine arrangement and will be approved **only** under limited circumstances.
- Situational telework does not apply to work performed during approved work travel, and employees are not required to request telework while on approved work travel.

General Telework Guidelines

- Telework arrangements shall **not** be granted on a routine basis unless a specific exception applies and is approved by the Executive Director.
- Requests to telework will be monitored for potential misuse and abuse.
- Employees through this policy understand that telework is neither an entitlement nor a right.
- The Commission or the employee may discontinue a telework arrangement at any time.
- Not all positions within the agency are suitable for telework.
- This policy complies with all applicable provisions of the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990**.

C. Reporting

OMES Quarterly Reporting

The Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) has established a reporting mechanism through **Workday**, which must be completed and submitted quarterly, beginning March 31, 2025. The Executive Director of the Commission is responsible for submitting this report to the Executive Director of OMES.

The report shall include:

- A list of Commission employees who routinely utilize telework under an exception approved by the Commission's Executive Director, in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 2024-29 and OMES guidance's.
- A brief explanation of why each exception applies.

Non-routine telework is not required to be included in this quarterly report.

Internal Commission Monthly Reporting

On the last business day of the month, beginning March 31, 2025, each Division Director shall prepare and submit a monthly report to the Human Resources Manager detailing telework usage within their division.

The report shall include:

- A list of all employees who utilized telework for any reason.
- The dates and times each employee teleworked.
- The type of telework
- The reason for the telework.

The Human Resources Manager will consolidate this information into a monthly report and submit the report to the Executive Director for review.

D. Supervisor and Division Director Responsibilities

Telework Oversight and Scheduling

Supervisors, under the direction of the Division Director, are responsible for determining telework schedules, work hours, and workweek adjustments for any employee teleworking under a contingent, medical, or emergency exception.

Policy Communication

- Supervisors must discuss this policy and telework requirements with employees before they begin teleworking under an approved exception.
- Supervisors must also review in-office work expectations with employees returning from telework.

Approval Process for Telework Requests

- **Situational Telework:** Employee requests, preferably in writing, shall be reviewed, approved or denied, and documented by the supervisor. Approved requests must align with an exception to the in-office work policy.
- **Medical Telework:** Employee requests, preferably in writing, require review by the supervisor, Division Director, Human Resources Manager, and Executive Director and will only be granted with appropriate physician documentation. The supervisor and division director shall establish a telework schedule and a return-to-office date for any approved medical telework.

Performance and Documentation

- Supervisors must ensure that both in-office and telework hours are used productively.
- Supervisors **must document all telework instances**, including the category of telework (contingent, medical, emergency, or situational), the reason for the telework, and the date(s) and times each employee teleworked. Supervisors must provide this information to the Division Director monthly prior to the submission of the Internal Commission Monthly Report by the Division Director to the Human Resources Manager which is due by the last business day of the month.

Step by Step Approval Process

Step	Contingent	Medical	Emergency	Situational
1	Supervisor notifies employee of need for contingent telework	Employee requests situational or medical telework request, preferably in writing, with physician documentation to supervisor.	Employee receives email from Commission, Department of Public Safety, or other official government office regarding an emergency situation or inclement weather reduction of services that impacts employee's ability to conduct in-office work.	Employee submits situational or medical telework request, preferably in writing, to supervisor.

2	Supervisor works with employee to determine and set employee's telework schedule as they work toward a return to in-office work for employee.	Supervisor, Division Director, Human Resources Manager, and Executive Director review employee's request and approve or deny request in writing.	**<u>If Emergency:</u>** Employee will follow the instructions given **<u>If Inclement Weather:</u>** Employee receives administrative leave but may request telework from supervisor.	Supervisor reviews request and approves or denies request in writing
3	Supervisor documents employee name, category of telework, reason for exception, and times and dates of telework	If approved, the supervisor with input from the Division Director shall establish employee's telework schedule and a return-to-office date	**<u>If Inclement Weather:</u>** If a Supervisor receives a request from an employee to telework, they shall review the request and approve or deny in writing	Supervisor documents employee name, category of telework, reason for exception, and times and dates of telework
4	Supervisor supplies the documented information from Step 3 to Division Director before the end of each month.	Supervisor documents request, employee's name, category of telework, times and dates of the telework	Supervisor documents telework, category of telework, reason for telework, and times and dates of telework	Supervisor supplies names of employees who teleworked, category of telework, reason for telework, and times and dates of telework to Division Director
5		Supervisor supplies names of employees who teleworked, category of telework, reason for telework, and time and date of telework to Division Director	Supervisor supplies names of employees who teleworked, category of telework, reason for telework, and times and dates of telework to Division Director	

E. General Requirements for Employees

Employees may submit a written request for situational or medical telework to their immediate supervisor. However, telework is not an employee right, and this policy does not grant any entitlements regarding telework.

- Not all agency positions are suitable for telework.

- Telework requests must align with an approved exception to in-office work and will be reviewed and either approved or denied based on the validity of the request.
- Telework arrangements may be revised or terminated at the Commission's discretion.

F. Terms of Employment

- Salary, benefits, and employer-sponsored insurance will not change due to telework.
- All Commission policies, rules, and practices apply at the telework location, including policies on internal and public communication.
- Failure to follow policies, rules, or procedures may result in disciplinary action.

G. Work Schedule and Accessibility

- Work hours remain unchanged—telework does not alter an employee's required hours.
- Employees must be available via email, phone, and Microsoft Teams during scheduled work hours.
- Employees must ensure clear and effective communication with colleagues and customers. Telework must not negatively impact service delivery, employee productivity, or team assignments.
- Supervisors may request documentation of telework activities at any time. Employees should use the Telework Activity Report or a similar reporting form to log their work activities.

Telework Activity Report

H. Dependent and Elder Care

Employees teleworking are not permitted to serve as routine, primary caregivers for dependents, children, or elderly family members during scheduled work hours. However, this does not require dependents to be absent from the home. Instead, teleworkers must ensure that caregiving responsibilities do not interfere with their ability to focus on work assignments.

- Teleworkers must arrange dependent care during work hours to ensure full concentration on job duties.
- Exception:
  If an unexpected, non-routine situation arises—such as a local emergency, school closure, or pandemic response—requiring dependents to remain home, the Commission will work flexibly with employees to accommodate their work/telework situation.

I. Reviews and Performance Evaluations

- Supervisors must immediately address any suspected telework abuse with the employee to seek a resolution.
- Supervisors will review employee telework monthly and report any suspected abuse to their division director.
- Division directors must include any telework concerns in their monthly report to HR.

- Telework performance will be assessed in conjunction with the employee's Performance Management Process (PMP).

J. Telework Site Requirements

Designated Workspace

- The employee that teleworks must maintain a clean, safe, and distraction-free workspace.

Work-Related Incidents & Liability

- In the event of an on-the-job (OTJ) injury or accident during telework hours, the employee must immediately report the incident to their supervisor, following Commission policy.
- The state's workers' compensation program applies if the injury occurs in the course of employment.
- However, the Commission assumes no responsibility or liability for injuries to anyone other than the teleworker at the telework site.

Prohibited Business Meetings

- Teleworkers may not hold business meetings with clients, customers, the public, or professional colleagues at their residence.
- Meetings with other Commission staff may not be scheduled at a teleworker's residence.

Virtual Meeting Standards

- Employees must ensure a clean and professional background during virtual meetings.
- Background noise and distractions must be minimized to maintain meeting quality and focus.