

SECTION: Human Resources		POLICY #: HR-026
Date Approved: May 19, 2020		Work From Home
Revision Date:	Review Date:	
Authority: Report HR 05-20		

PURPOSE

To provide eligible employees with the opportunity to perform their work away from the traditional work setting on an infrequent or emergency basis. This guideline refers to non-traditional work arrangements where an employee is scheduled to work from home to perform their full or partial duties, which is often accomplished by electronic means.

SCOPE

This guideline applies to:

- All Town Employees
- Hanover Public Library Employees
- Launch Pad Youth Activity and Technology Centre Employees
- Council Members

GUIDELINES

1. Eligibility

- Working from home is not a universal privilege and is not intended to replace an employee's traditional work arrangement.
- All working from home decisions shall be made in a fair and equitable manner. Each request will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the circumstances, nature of work, and service delivery needs, as well as the employee's demonstrated work habits.
- Working from home cannot be implemented for all Town positions. Some areas will have greater flexibility to facilitate working from home and as such, there will be variation across the Town in the ability to allow work from home.
- It is possible that some positions may require a combination of working from home as well as on-site.
- All staff who are approved to work from home on a regular basis (eg. two (2) days per week or per month), or for a time period of more than two (2) consecutive days in an unforeseen or emergency situation, are required to work with their Supervisor and Department Head to complete form HR-026(F) Work From Home Agreement and submit it to Human Resources.
- Working from home does not alter or replace the employee's conditions of employment.
- While working at home, employees remain obligated to comply with all Town policies, guidelines, practices, and instructions.
- The employee's compensation, benefits, work status, and general work responsibilities will not change due to working from home.
- Work at home arrangements will continue to be subject to operational and other work-related requirements and may be modified or cancelled as necessary. If at any time a work from home arrangement no longer meets the needs of the corporation or productivity goals, the Town reserves the right to cancel the agreement and have the employee return to their regular work location.

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- j. The Town will provide as much notice as possible to any employee working at home if the arrangement needs to be modified or cancelled; however, there may be circumstances where arrangements need to be modified or cancelled immediately.

2. General Expectations

- a. The amount of time an employee is expected to work per day, or per pay period, will not change as a result of working from home.
- b. Employees are expected to be available by phone and/or email during the working hours specified on form HR-026(F) Work From Home Agreement.
- c. Employees must be available for meetings and other circumstances deemed necessary by management, whether in-person or remotely.
- d. Any changes to an employee's work schedule must be communicated to their Supervisor or designate as soon as possible.
- e. If an employee cannot be reached while working from home, or if the employee is found to be away from home during working hours, the employee may be subject to progressive corrective measures if such absences have not been communicated to and approved by their Supervisor or designate in advance.
- f. Employees are expected to keep in regular communication with their Supervisor and to provide updates on work projects and efforts. Employees may be asked to document what they have been working on from home and submit it periodically.
- g. Employees working from home are expected to make every effort to be just as productive at home as they are when in the physical workplace.
- h. Time spent working at home must be coded accordingly in Dayforce (e.g., COVID PAID – work from home).

3. Leaves of Absence

- a. Employees will continue to follow regular protocol for leaves of absence including vacation, lieu, and sick time, as it applies to full-time and part-time staff.
- b. Employees should communicate absences to their Supervisor or designate in advance wherever possible to avoid progressive corrective measures.
- c. Full-time employees are expected to use their allotted vacation or lieu time within the regular time periods as per HR-001 Personnel Policy.
- d. Where full-time employees are unable to complete a full shift at home as scheduled, vacation or lieu time may be used to cover the balance of the day, or the time will need to be made up. Part-time staff will need to make up the time.

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4. Use of Town Property

- a. The use of equipment, phones, computers, software, data, etc. provided by the Town for use at home is limited to authorized persons only, and may only be used for purposes related to corporate business.
- b. Office supplies (paper, pens, etc.) will be provided by the Town as required for the employee to perform their duties.
- c. Employees must take reasonable steps to protect Town property from theft, damage and misuse, in accordance with HR-001 Personnel Policy.
- d. Employees will be solely responsible for any loss or damage to any Town equipment or property in their possession, including equipment or property being transported to and from their home, whether in the designated work area or otherwise, except for normal wear and tear.
- e. Employees must notify their Supervisor immediately of any loss or damage to Town equipment or property in their possession.
- f. All Town-owned electronic devices and equipment will remain subject to provisions of ADM-008 Information Technology (IT) & Mobile Devices Policy.

5. Use of Personal Property

- a. The Town will not be responsible for any operating costs that are associated with the employee using their home as an alternative worksite by choice. This includes home maintenance, insurance, or utilities. Consideration may be given where the Town mandates work from home, on a case by case basis (eg. partial reimbursement, flat payments, issuance of a T2200 form etc.).
- b. Costs for furniture necessary to work from home such as chairs, desks, filing cabinets, etc. will not be reimbursed by the Town and are the employee's responsibility.
- c. Prior approval must be obtained from the employee's Supervisor in order to be reimbursed for reasonable items, such as long-distance work-related calls that must be placed using the employee's personal phone. Expense reports and proof of expense must be provided.
- d. The employee is responsible for ensuring adequate home insurance is in place to cover their home work space.
- e. In-person work-related meetings are not permitted to take place in personal homes. They must instead take place on the Town's premises.
- f. The Town will not be held liable for any damages to an employee's property or for any injuries to family members, visitors, or others in the employee's home while the employee is working from home.

6. Health and Safety

- a. Employees who work from home are covered under *the Occupational Health and Safety Act* and *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* as an extension of the regular workplace.

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- b. The employee is responsible for setting up and maintaining a designated workspace that meets workplace health and safety requirements. This includes ensuring:
 - i. The work area reasonably accommodates the required furniture and equipment.
 - ii. The floor is in good condition and free from slip or trip hazards.
 - iii. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are properly installed and maintained.
 - iv. A first aid kit is available.
 - v. Lighting is sufficient for the tasks being performed.
 - vi. Ventilation and room temperature are good and can be controlled.
 - vii. There is a path to an exit that is wide, free of obstructions, and reasonably direct.
 - viii. Fixed electrical components (outlets, switches, etc.) are in good condition.
 - ix. Electrical cords are safely routed or stowed.
 - x. Electrical equipment is free from any obvious external damage.
 - xi. The work area and equipment is cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis.
- c. The employee must report all work-related accidents or injuries to their Supervisor and complete the necessary forms in accordance with Town policy and procedure, as soon as practicable.
- d. Employees who are injured while working from home are eligible to apply for WSIB benefits. While the WSIB assesses each case individually based on its circumstances, generally the injury must have occurred in the course of the regular work hours and/or in the home/workplace, which the Ministry of Labour defines as the actual space where work is conducted during the time when work is being done.
- e. Incidents of workplace violence and harassment must be reported to the employee's Supervisor and Human Resources immediately. (e.g., harassment via email or phone calls by colleagues, members of the public, etc.)
- f. The employee is required to report any work-related hazards which exist at home to their Supervisor. This may include hazards related to workstation set up or domestic violence.
- g. If the home workplace is found to be unsafe and cannot be made safe, the Town may revoke or cancel the employee's work from home arrangement.

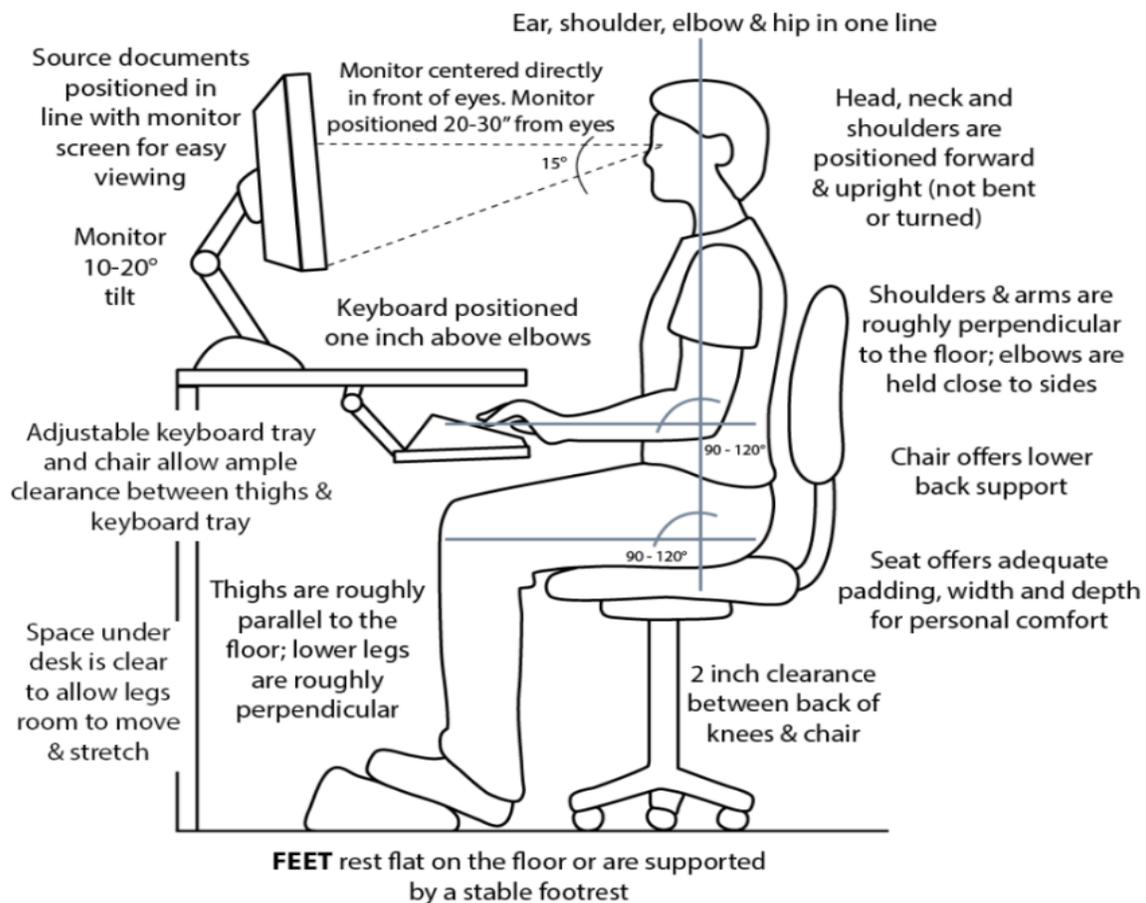
7. Ergonomics

- a. To support a healthy and safe work environment, employees are expected to create a workspace at home that is as ergonomic as possible.
- b. Sit in a chair with good back and lumbar support. Do not work from a couch or bed.
- c. Maintain good posture. Sit or stand up straight with your shoulders back. Avoid hunching.
- d. Keep feet flat on the floor or slightly elevated on a footrest.
- e. Keyboard and mouse should be at the same working height.
- f. Elbows should be bent at 90 degrees or slightly greater.
- g. Shoulders should be relaxed, wrists should be straight, and forearms should be supported.

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- h. Monitors should be about one arm's length away with the top of the monitor placed at eye level.
- i. If using a laptop, use an external mouse and keyboard to help maintain positioning noted above. Elevate the laptop so the top of the screen is at eye level or use an external monitor.
- j. Keep paperwork and any other items you will need within arm's reach.
- k. Avoid cradling phones or headsets between your ear and shoulder. Use the speakerphone option if you need to be hands-free. (Ensure information remains confidential and cannot be heard by other parties).
- l. Reduce eye strain by looking at an object in the distance for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.
- m. Change your position throughout the day, e.g., stand and work at your kitchen counter while doing paperwork or walk around while on the phone.
- n. Refer to the diagram below for assistance in setting up an ergonomic workstation.

THE ERGONOMIC WORKSTATION



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8. Security, Confidentiality and Privacy

- a. Employees are responsible for the security of the work that is conducted from home.
- b. All documents (electronic and hardcopy) used by the employee in their work for the Town must be treated as proprietary and confidential. Accordingly, documents must be kept in a secure work area and must not be accessible by others.
- c. Information Technology (IT) equipment provided by the Town must be used in accordance with ADM-008 Information Technology (IT) & Mobile Devices Policy. There may be a requirement for staff to complete a signoff under ADM-008 Information Technology (IT) & Mobile Devices Policy.
- d. All TOMRMS files removed from the workplace must be signed-out according to regular procedure.
- e. Unauthorized individuals are not to be given access to any files, equipment, or documents.
- f. Employees must continue to comply with confidentiality provisions of their employment agreements, and of other Town policies and guidelines.
- g. Employees accessing electronic Town files from home are expected to do so via the virtual private network (VPN). Town files should not be saved on personal computers.
- h. Personal information about identifiable individuals must remain protected in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Supervisors and Managers shall:

- a. Comply with all provisions of this guideline.
- b. Review and consider requests from employees to work from home, either on a short-term or long-term basis.
- c. Maintain consistent and regular communications with employees working from home, including setting expectations and monitoring progress and performance.
- d. Address any reports of hazards or unsafe conditions as provided by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

2. Employees shall:

- a. Comply with all provisions of this guideline.

3. Human Resources shall:

- a. Maintain records of work from home arrangements and agreements.
- b. Provide guidance to employees, Managers, and Supervisors related to this guideline.

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TIPS FOR WORKING AT HOME

1. **Maintain Regular Hours**

Set a schedule and stick to it as much as possible. This helps support work-life balance. Your schedule may be flexible depending on approval by Supervisors or designates, but you need to ensure you know when you are working and when you are done.

Maintaining regular hours also includes scheduling breaks. Do not skip or shorten your lunches because you are not in the office; you still need time away from your work station.

2. **Create a Routine**

Creating a routine, especially in the morning, will help you stay consistent with when to start work. It is best to continue to set an alarm to get up and get ready for the day the same as you would if you were working in-office. Maintain your normal morning habits such as making a cup of coffee, eating breakfast, and getting dressed.

End your work day with a routine that signals your day is done. Allow yourself to separate your evening from your regular working day.

3. **Set Ground Rules for People at Home**

If you are working from home and have children present, they will benefit from clear rules about what they can and cannot do during your work time. Set ground rules and expectations for others in your household as well. This helps ensure your productivity doesn't suffer and you don't become too overwhelmed balancing work and home demands.

4. **Set up a Dedicated Workspace**

Dedicate a desk, table and/or other area to use as your work space. Remember to be as ergonomic as possible.

5. **Leave your Workspace**

Try to leave your workspace regularly. Take a moment to step outside to get some fresh air and natural light, or get up to stretch and walk around.

When your work day is done, avoid the draw to keep going back to your workstation and logging in. There may be times where it is required to monitor work after hours; however, set boundaries for yourself in this regard to maintain an effective work-life balance.

6. **Request what you need**

Speak with your Supervisor or designate if there is something you need in order to perform your work more effectively at home.

7. **Socialize with Colleagues**

A common problem that arises when working from home is loneliness, disconnect, and isolation. Maintaining relationships with colleagues is important. Stay in touch with coworkers over the phone, email, or even via text. Attend meetings through conference calls or video conference and participate to make your presence known.

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8. Over Communicate

It is more difficult for people to know what your availability is and what you are working on when you are working from home. Over communicate to keep everyone informed about what is happening.

9. Be Positive

Working remotely can be challenging, so it is important to try to stay positive. It is easy to misinterpret the tone in emails and other documents. Be mindful of this when reading documents from others and when composing them yourself.

10. Be Realistic

It takes a lot of focus to work from home in an unconventional space. It may take a bit of time for you to figure out how to best set up your workstation and how to access all of the information or systems you require. Additionally, you may find that you are interrupted or distracted at times. If you find yourself distracted, don't be too hard on yourself. Instead, ask yourself if you would also be dealing with distractions and interruptions at work. If the answer is yes, cut yourself some slack, refocus, then get back to work.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

HR-026(F) Work From Home Agreement
HR-001 Personnel Policy
HR-002 Code of Conduct
ADM-008 Information Technology (IT) & Mobile Devices Policy

WORK FROM HOME AGREEMENT

EMPLOYEE NAME		POSITION	
SUPERVISOR		DEPARTMENT	
EFFECTIVE DATE		EXPIRY DATE	

PERSONAL PHONE #		WORK CELL #	
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WORK FROM HOME SCHEDULE		
DAY OF THE WEEK	HOURS OF WORK	NOTES/ADDITIONAL INFO (Eg. varied schedule details)
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

EQUIPMENT BORROWED FOR HOME USE			
Equipment	Model Number	Serial Number	Condition

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION / PROVISIONS

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By placing my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand all contents of this Agreement and HR-026 Work From Home Policy. I acknowledge and agree that it expressly forms part of my employment agreement. I agree to adhere to these provisions and understand that violation of the provisions outlined in HR-026 Work From Home Policy may result in progressive corrective measures, up to and including termination of employment. I further acknowledge that I have an area to work in at home that is safe and where I can be productive.

Employee Signature _____ **Date** _____

APPROVAL

Department Head Signature _____ **Date** _____

Supervisor Signature _____ **Date** _____