Effective March 17, 2020

Orange County Sanitation District
Short-Term Telecommuting Guidelines

Response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic

The safety, health and well-being of employees and the public we serve is a top priority and aligns with the OCSD’s Mission Statement. In response to the direction provided by state and health officials, OCSD departments may authorize temporary telecommuting arrangements for employees in non-operational positions, performing business functions that could be conducted remotely.

OCSD considers telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where employee, job, and job characteristics are able to continue to meet business needs. Telecommuting allows employees to work at home during their regular work week from a remote location that satisfies the criteria outlined below. Telecommuting is not a guarantee and is not an organization-wide benefit. In no way does it change the terms and conditions of employment outlined in Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) Agreements with represented units or OCSD personnel policies and procedures.

These guidelines are temporary in nature, intended for use in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and does not set precedent for future telecommuting work, and may not be applicable for future use for any reason beyond this event. Requests to telecommute on a short-term basis will be evaluated and approved based on business need, critical functions and OCSD’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). Approval will be required by the respective Department Head and Human Resources.

TELECOMMUTING CRITERIA

Telecommuting may be considered for the following reasons:

- Quarantine order mandated by public health agency
- Business continuity
- School closures (employee is not the primary caregiver)
- Self-quarantine due to possible exposure, being symptomatic, or chronic health condition

PROCEDURE

The Employee will be required to submit a Short-Term Telecommuting Request Form and associated proof / justification related to the request. The information will include:

- An outline of the work that will be completed remotely, as well as the deliverables that will be achieved.
- The number of days per week (full/partial days), hours per day, and the arrangements that will be made to ensure work can be completed in a safe and secure manner.

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TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Human Resources will review the medical components described herein of the telecommuting request.
- Department Heads will assess telecommuting viability based on criticality of position, work duties and business continuity.
- Telecommuting is a voluntary work alternative that is a privilege, not an entitlement, and must be requested and approved by the employee’s Department Head and Human Resources prior to the employee working remotely.
- Telecommuting is a temporary measure and will be reviewed continuously during this period. OCSD may alter, extend or terminate this short-term telecommuting option at any time at its sole discretion.
- Requests to telecommute on a short-term basis as a result of school closures or for self-quarantine purposes will be solely at OCSD’s discretion and may require documented proof, as applicable.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Telecommuting is not intended for the replacement or as a substitute for childcare. The employee shall make regular childcare arrangements and must keep the remote work area free from personal disruptions.
2. The employee shall record their time in accordance with OCSD payroll practices. While telecommuting, any sick, vacation, or personal leave taken shall be reported on the timecard appropriately.
3. The employee shall complete their regular and complete job responsibilities and maintain productivity, performance, communication and responsiveness standards as if working on-site.
4. Management may assign additional and/or different duties at its discretion.
5. The employee shall be accessible by phone/internet within a reasonable time period during the short-term telecommuting period.
6. An employee must forgo working remotely if needed in the office to meet operational business need. The supervisor shall provide reasonable notice whenever possible, however, the employee may be required to report to the office without any advance notice, as needed.
7. Telecommuting does not change the duties, obligations, responsibilities or terms and conditions of employment. Employees must comply with the applicable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and OCSD Personnel Policies and Procedures. Employees who abuse the short-term telecommuting guidelines shall be subject to loss of their telecommuting privileges or disciplinary action up to and including separation of employment.
8. Non-exempt employees will not work overtime without prior approval from their supervisor and are required to take rest and meal breaks while telecommuting.

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9. The employee shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe, ergonomic and secure work environment, and shall only use equipment issued by OCSD (i.e. laptops, phones, etc.) for business purposes.

10. In the event of equipment malfunction, the employee shall notify the supervisor immediately. If it is deemed that repairs will require a longer period of time, the employee may be asked to report to their normal work location until the equipment functions as necessary.

11. OCSD will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of the employee’s home office, such as remodeling, furniture, lighting, etc.

12. Business expenses that shall not be allowed include maintenance or repairs of privately-owned equipment, utility cost associated with the use of equipment used remotely, or equipment supplies. Individual tax implications related to the remote work location are the sole responsibility of the employee.

13. Employees are expected to ensure the protection of proprietary, private and sensitive information accessible from their remote location. The employee shall ensure that only such information as is necessary for the completion of their assignments will be transferred to and/or printed at their remote location in a safe and secure manner.

14. Employees are expected to protect OCSD electronic devices and equipment from loss or damage, and any suspicious activities, threats or anomalies involving OCSD equipment must be immediately reported to management and Information Technology.

15. Employees are expected to maintain a safe remote workspace that is free from safety hazards. Injuries sustained by the employee in an off-site location and in conjunction with their regular work duties, during agreed upon working hours, must be reported promptly to the supervisor. Such reports of injuries off-site will be handled in the same manner as reports of injuries in the workplace on-site.

16. Employees may be required to submit status reports or daily records of work activity performed.

17. Employees are expected to adhere to all OCSD policies and procedures and applicable MOU for the duration of this agreement.

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