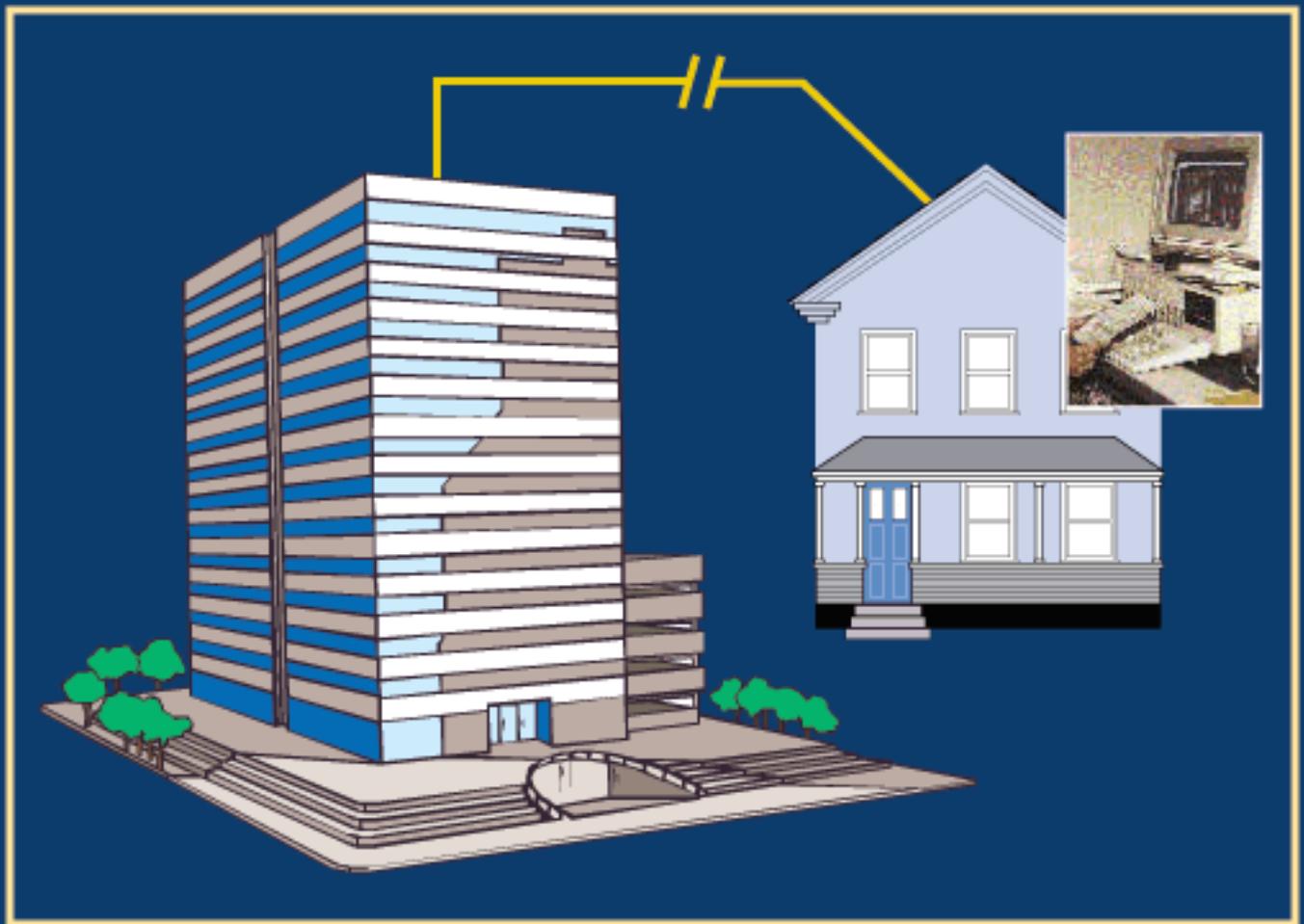


# HANDBOOK ON DOE-FLEX

DOE'S FLEXIPLACE PROGRAM



March 2000



Office of Management  
and Administration

*People are the Department of Energy's most important resource, and we will develop, motivate, and support them in accomplishing our missions. Employees are more than just the jobs they do, and the Department is committed to helping them meet their responsibilities on the job, at home, and in their communities. In doing so, the Department will establish flexible work arrangements that improve the quality of employees' work life and contribute to a cleaner environment and a safer, more productive workplace.*



*Bill Richardson*

*Secretary*

## Preface to the Handbook on DOE-Flex

The purpose of this handbook is provide information that is generally available through a variety of sources. The information contained in this handbook should serve as general guidance for Department of Energy (DOE) organizations in the development, implementation, and assessment of local programs for Federal employees within DOE. Local organizational needs, policies, and the provisions of collective bargaining agreements may necessitate different approaches to establishing flexiplace arrangements.

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## INTRODUCTION

### What is "Flexiplace"?

Flexiplace is a term that refers to a program that covers employees who work at sites other than their official workplace. In general, flexiplace assumes that some office workers who would normally be spending most or all of the regular work week working in a Department of Energy (DOE) facility will now spend some portion of that work week working from home or elsewhere off site during normal working hours. DOE has coined the term "**DOE-Flex**" as the name of its flexiplace program. These terms are to be used interchangeably with "telecommuting," "telework," and "work-at-home," which are other terms that are used to describe a flexiplace program. Employees who participate in a flexiplace program are often referred to as "telecommuters" or "teleworkers."

Employee participation is voluntary, subject to management approval, and local policies, including applicable provisions of labor management agreements. Although any employee may request to participate in the program, the nature of an employee's work, such as working with classified information, maintaining DOE facilities, or the need to be in the office for face-to-face meetings, provide front-line customer service, or to utilize office resources, may limit the employee as to where that work can be performed. This program is not an employee benefit or entitlement, does not change the terms and conditions of an employee's appointment, is not a substitute for child or other dependent care arrangements, nor is anyone who is approved to participate assured that this work option will continue indefinitely. In implementing this program, management must meet with employee unions, as applicable, to ensure that local programs are consistent with existing collective bargaining or other labor-management agreements, and that all labor relations obligations are satisfied.

### What has been the history of flexiplace in the Government and DOE?

In January, 1990, the Federal Government began piloting flexible workplace arrangements that were known as flexiplace arrangements. In the summers of 1994 and 1996, the President issued memoranda directing the Heads of Executive Departments to expand the use of family-friendly workplace practices, including telecommuting. Those memoranda announced that the Federal Government was to become a model employer by effectively utilizing flexible workplace arrangements to increase productivity, recruit and retain a well-qualified workforce, and assist employees to balance their work and family needs. In January 1996, the President's Management Council endorsed a *National Telecommuting Initiative* to increase the number of Federal employees who telecommute to 3% by the end of FY 98 and 15% by the end of FY 02. In the Fall of 1997, the Vice President issued a report to the President that stated that the Federal Government "should greatly expand the number of (F)ederal workers who telecommute."

The Department of Energy began its program in February, 1995, when it issued a "*Telecommuting Guide*." By the end of FY 98, the Department had 2.3% of its workforce in

some type of flexiplace arrangement. Since 1995, the Department has utilized this program primarily to accommodate employees who have temporary or continuing health problems, but has also had over 250 employees in regular and recurring formal flexiplace arrangements. Within Headquarters, DOE completed a successful pilot flexiplace program in 1999 that was developed in coordination with the National Treasury Employees Union. Although almost all the formal arrangements have been work-at-home situations, a few employees have worked at alternative DOE sites and at the General Services Administration (GSA)-sponsored telecenters, which are state-of-the-art office sharing workplaces, in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

In March, 2000, Secretary Richardson launched an initiative to expand the use of flexiplace arrangements and established goals for employee participation for fiscal years 2000 and 2001 that will ensure that the President's goal of 15% participation is met or exceeded by the end of fiscal year 2002. A copy of the Secretary's memorandum that announced the initiative, including the implementation plan, is in Appendix G.

### **What are the objectives and benefits of DOE-Flex?**

Because of DOE's increasing need to be a competitive employer in a tight labor market, the many advances in information technology since the program began, and the benefits described below, the Department is launching an aggressive campaign to stimulate expansion of its flexiplace program with the issuance of this publication.

The following are the main reasons that the Department provides an active flexiplace program.

- Improve productivity by reducing the time and stress of having to commute in heavy traffic, allowing employees to work in a reduced-distraction environment, and/or accommodating employees who are not able to work full-time or commute due to health issues.
- Improve employee well-being and the quality of worklife by giving employees more options to balance work and family demands.
- Maintain work production and services when a facility is closed due to a severe storm or building operation problem or when an employee is required to work at another location.
- Improve the Department's competitiveness in recruiting and retaining highly qualified employees.
- Reduce the number of commuters, which will result in a decrease in energy consumption, traffic and parking congestion, and air pollution.
- Reduce costly building space by making more efficient use of existing space and delaying the need for additional space for employees who frequently are not at their regular workplaces.

## CHAPTER I - IMPLEMENTING DOE-FLEX

### When should an organization establish DOE-Flex?

All Departmental Elements are expected to establish DOE-Flex so that it will be available when needed.

### What are the steps for establishing DOE-Flex?

- Establish a program coordinator position - All Departmental Elements with personnel authority are expected to have at least one individual fully trained who can advise and assist supervisors, managers, and employees on this program. Program coordinators are referred to as "DOE-Flex Advisors." DOE-Flex Advisors are responsible for initiating and maintaining local programs, including coordinating the following steps, issuing local guidance, ensuring any needed training is provided, and maintaining records on all applicants and participants.
- Meet with managers - Discuss the establishment of a program with supervisors and managers so that they understand that a program is expected to be established, what their roles and responsibilities are in administering it (see the details that follow), and the impact on local flexiplace policies and practices.
- Meet with local union officials and/or representatives of employee groups - If a local union(s) and/or employee interest group(s) exist, discuss the establishment of a program with those representatives to solicit their support and participation in the development of the program and impact on existing collective bargaining agreements. Because this program affects employee working conditions, organizations must satisfy their labor relations obligations.
- Meet with information technology staffs - Determine how information can be accessed from another location, whether classified information can be accessed remotely and be adequately protected, and what equipment is needed and available. Determine how and when DOE equipment will be inventoried, maintained, and covered by insurance.
- Determine potential program costs - Identify possible alternative workplaces and whether or not any costs for renting space and equipment will be incurred. Determine whether or not the main computer will need to be modified, including adding appropriate security protections, to allow access from alternative locations. Determine whether the organization can afford to provide office equipment and telephone lines or whether participants will be responsible for providing them. Determine whether the organization can afford to pay for long-distance calls made from alternative locations and how that can be accomplished. Determine how participants will be provided or reimbursed for needed office supplies or maintenance and, if appropriate, additional insurance for their equipment.

- Select positions - Establish an inventory of those positions that contain one or more assignments that can be accomplished at an alternative workplace. The inventory may be established as a result of supervisors, along with human resources staffs, identifying which positions should be listed on the inventory, employee requests/applications to participate, job re-engineering efforts, and changes in technology.
- Inform all employees - Once the details of administering the program have been finalized, inform all employees of the program, including providing training and orientation sessions, identifying the characteristics of suitable positions and employees, and how the program will be administered.

### **What are the types of flexiplace arrangements?**

Flexiplace arrangements are (1) for regular, i.e., recurring one or more days per week, assignments and (2) for situational, i.e., temporary, intermittent, short-term, project-oriented assignments, and (3) to accommodate employees for their medical issues.

### **When and why is a flexiplace agreement needed?**

A flexiplace agreement, such as the sample at Appendix B, should be completed for both medical and non-medical work situations that, at a minimum, are expected to last more than a few days. Ideally, a comprehensive agreement should be completed for all flexiplace work situations, but, because of the urgency of a project or a personal situation, this may not be practical. A sample of a short-term agreement is provided at Appendix C to meet the need of an unanticipated or urgent situation. Agreements may be for continuous periods; regular and recurring periods, such as one or two days per week; or intermittent situations, such as the completion of a specific project. Agreements are needed to protect the Department from liabilities, as well as its property and records; to protect employees who may be incurring costs on behalf of the Department or get injured at an alternative work location; and to clarify responsibilities, when the participant should be accessible, and performance expectations. If there is a significant change in the participant's assignment, then a new agreement should be prepared. If there is any other change to the agreement, then an amendment or addendum should be prepared and signed.

### **What is the duration of a flexiplace agreement?**

Agreements may be for any period of time, but should be reviewed and re-certified at least semi-annually (a sample re-certification is at Appendix E). When an agreement is the first one for either or both the supervisor and employee, it may be best to establish the agreement for a trial period of up to 90 days to ensure that the parties are comfortable with the arrangement. It may be terminated by management or when an employee requests that it be terminated.

### **Who should approve or disapprove a flexiplace agreement?**

Since an agreement is primarily between a first line supervisor and subordinate, approval should be at the lowest management level practical. However, to help ensure effective resources management and operational readiness, flexiplace agreements should be concurred in

by a higher level management official. Disapprovals should also be concurred in at least at the second level of supervision. DOE-Flex Advisors do not approve or disapprove participation in the program.

### **What are sound reasons for terminating or modifying a flexiplace agreement?**

An agreement may need to be terminated when there is a change in the organization's mission or staffing level. An agreement may also need to be terminated when a participant's productivity is noticeably diminished in quantity and/or quality, when products are not completed within agreed-upon time frames (assuming that the delays are within the employee's control), the participant fails to communicate readily with the supervisor or co-workers resulting in ineffective team productivity, the participant is repeatedly not accessible by telephone or e-mail during a mutually agreed-upon work schedule, or other similar reasons. In these or similar cases where there are performance or conduct problems, the supervisor should attempt to find the causes of, and solutions for, the problems, in consultation with the employee, before terminating an agreement. However, if the problem continues at an unsatisfactory level, the employee should be required to return to the main office. Supervisors should give reasonable notice that an agreement is being terminated.

### **When can a participant voluntarily terminate an agreement?**

Participants should be permitted to terminate at any time. Organizations should establish local time frames and procedures for a participant to voluntarily terminate. Participants who are terminating due to difficulties in obtaining necessary support from their organizations, because they feel that their career opportunities are being jeopardized as a result of their participation in the program, or similar problems, should first discuss these issues with their supervisor and the local DOE-Flex Advisor and give them time to resolve the issues, including utilizing local dispute resolution processes, if appropriate. Employees should give reasonable notice of their desire to terminate the agreement.

### **Which positions should be selected?**

Positions that include tasks that are can be measured, tracked, or monitored, e.g., data or word processing, computer programming, telephone calling; or involve casework or research, or are project-oriented, i.e., result in specific work products, e.g., data analysis, proposal reviews, literature reviews, or written reports, are appropriate for selection. Positions that do not include quantifiable work products; involve extensive unplanned face-to-face contacts in the main office; access to materials that cannot be removed or are difficult to be removed; or involve work on special equipment or in unique facilities are usually not appropriate for this program. Because regular flexiplace arrangements generally involve 1-3 days per pay period, the goal for these arrangements is to select positions that include 1-3 days of suitable work for flexiplace, even if the entire job is not suited to being performed at an alternative workplace. Supervisory and managerial positions should not be excluded from consideration for any type of arrangement just because they are supervisory. Positions that involve classified information should be approved only when there are adequate safeguards in place to ensure that the classified information will not be compromised.

### **What changes, if any, are needed to position descriptions?**

Most flexiplace arrangements are not likely to have any significant impact on properly described position descriptions. However, the section on supervisory controls and work environment should be reviewed for accuracy since participants will normally be working independently in a sedentary environment.

### **Which employees should participate?**

Some employees occupying selected positions potentially make better participants than others. Those who should be considered are employees who are self-starters; have demonstrated that they work well with little or no supervision; are dependable and trustworthy; have a performance rating of record of at least fully-satisfactory or passing in a pass/fail system; have a good understanding of the operation of their organization and responsibilities, e.g., worked in their organization at least 6 months and in their positions at least 3 months; and their alternative work location meets any program security and equipment requirements determined by the supervisor. Employees who generally should not be considered are new employees who need time to adjust to, and learn, the new organization; those who require on-the-job training or need close supervision; those who are dependent on the interaction with co-workers and may suffer from the feeling of being isolated; and those who are dependent on resources that cannot be accessed from a remote location. Employees who need to care for a family member at home should not be eliminated from consideration unless the needs of the family member will be too distracting or preclude the employee from being productive during the hours required to be available. Flexiplace should not be considered a substitute for child and other needed dependent care arrangements.

### **What are the steps for administering the program once it has been established?**

For positions identified as potentially appropriate for **DOE-Flex**, a three-step procedure to process and approve/disapprove participation in **DOE-Flex** is suggested. The review, decision, and notification steps should be taken in as timely a manner as possible.

- First, an employee interested in participating in **DOE-Flex** should carefully assess his or her work requirements, skills, and suitability of his or her alternate workplace situation, and then discuss these issues with his or her supervisor before making a formal request. Alternatively, an employee's supervisor may suggest to the employee that he or she consider participating in **DOE-Flex**. This is intended to help both think through what assignment(s) are appropriate to be performed, understand how the arrangement will work, and understand each other's needs.
- Second, an employee still interested in participating in **DOE-Flex** after discussing it with his or her supervisor may be required to submit a formal request (a sample application is at Appendix A) to the appropriate approving official (through that supervisor). Employees requesting **DOE-Flex** for medical reasons should submit medical documentation, such as completing a medical certificate (see Appendix F of

DOE G 341.1-1).

- Third, the supervisor should either recommend approval or disapproval (with a justification) and forward the request to a higher level official. Approving/denying officials should notify the supervisors of their decisions and the supervisors should inform the employees.

### **Should equipment be provided DOE-Flex participants?**

There is no requirement to provide equipment to participants. Budget constraints may limit the ability of an organization to provide such resources. Participants may use their own equipment providing adequate safeguards exist to protect the equipment and records. See Chapter V regarding providing equipment and protecting equipment and records.

### **How is an arrangement with a GSA-sponsored telecenter administered?**

A list of telecenters is at <http://www.gsa.gov/pbs/owi/telecenters.htm>. Organizations should contact the appropriate telecenter directly for assistance. The web site for the telecenter managers is <http://www.wmtc.org>. Information on pricing and billing procedures is available through that web site. The preferred payment method is with a charge card.

### **What are the supervisor and employee responsibilities?**

Supervisors should receive orientation or training on **DOE-Flex**; identify those positions that contain work assignments that can be accomplished at an alternative workplace; approve or recommend approval and disapproval of the employee's participation; complete flexiplace agreements and re-certify them at least semi-annually if for more than 6 months duration; amend the employee's position description, if needed; ensure that a participant has the resources needed to work at an alternate workplace; sign off on the employee's workplace safety checklist; communicate specific work assignments and performance expectations; maintain records of employee performance, work accomplishments, and quality of work; certify the employee's time and attendance at the alternative workplace, along with spot-checking during agreed-upon hours of work; administer leave; if warranted, inspect employees' workplaces after reasonable notification.

Supervisors and managers with subordinate positions included on the inventory are expected to actively promote and support this program. If a supervisor is not comfortable in establishing a flexiplace arrangement, then that supervisor should seek assistance from the DOE-Flex Advisor.

Employees should receive orientation or training on **DOE-Flex**; initiate a discussion with, and application or flexiplace plan for, supervisors; complete flexiplace agreements and workplace safety checklists; are to be reasonably accessible during, and report time for, agreed-upon hours of work; complete work assignments in a timely manner; ensure that appropriate resources are available, or have access to them, to perform assignments; ensure that any overtime work has been previously approved; ensure that training and leave schedules are approved; ensure that appropriate safeguards exist to protect DOE equipment and information; ensure that the

alternative workplace is hazard-free and normally free from distractions.

**When should an employee be accessible?**

Supervisors should get agreement on when a participant can be contacted by either telephone or e-mail. Participants are expected to be available during mutually agreed-upon work periods, unless other arrangements have been approved by the participant's supervisor, such as for training or leave. While employees on flexiplace arrangements are not expected to always be able to answer telephone calls or return e-mail immediately, there should be agreements set about certain times of the day when this kind of access is assured and about the frequency with which voice mail and e-mail messages will be checked and answered. Failure to maintain the terms of these agreements can be a basis for termination from the program.

**When should supervisors, managers, and employees be oriented or trained on the program?**

DOE-Flex Advisors should provide training for all employees once the program has been established. Training sessions for supervisors/managers and employees should be structured to facilitate open and frank discussions of issues. Once the initial training has been completed, follow-up information should be provided and periodic sessions should be held, such as during "brown bag" luncheons, or during employee orientation sessions. When a new supervisor is assigned to supervise an existing participant, then that supervisor should receive orientation or training and be provided a copy of all relevant program documents.

**What is the impact of a change in a supervisor or position on a flexiplace agreement?**

A change in a supervisor is not an automatic basis for terminating an existing agreement. If the new supervisor has not received training on the program, then the training should occur as soon as possible. In the event the new supervisor is not comfortable with the arrangement for one of the reasons specified above after a reasonable period of time, then the supervisor may terminate the agreement. A new supervisor should re-certify an existing agreement.

A significant change in an employee's duties warrants a review of an existing agreement. In the event that the work assignments that are to be performed at an alternative workplace are affected, then an existing agreement should be amended or a new one prepared.

**Will the program be evaluated? If so, when and what will be included?**

DOE-Flex should be reviewed periodically at both the Departmental and local levels. Pertinent data on flexiplace usage, e.g., the number of arrangements or percentage of employees, type of arrangements, duration, positions, grade levels, reasons for terminations, etc., is collected as part of the annual Human Resources Management Accountability Program (HRMAP) data collection and analysis efforts, or as the need arises. Often, Departmental Elements develop or expand their programs on a pilot basis, in which case evaluations are normally part of those efforts to determine whether or not the programs should be made permanent, modified, or terminated. At a minimum, organizations should periodically review the inventory of positions

selected for inclusion in the program; review the number of, and reasons for, voluntary terminations; and survey supervisors, managers, union officials, and employees to determine whether local programs are effective and what changes, if any, are needed to improve the local program. Where collective bargaining agreements exist that address flexiplace, it is suggested that such assessments be conducted with the involvement of local union officials.

## CHAPTER II - PERFORMANCE ISSUES

### **What impact does DOE-Flex have on performance standards?**

Supervisors should establish methods for evaluating work performed at the alternative workplace. This should include progress reporting and/or other procedures to facilitate employee-supervisor communication. As provided by section 4302 (a) (2) of title 5, U.S.C., employee participation in developing performance standards is encouraged. Supervisors and participants should discuss and clearly define tasks and expectations.

Critical elements and performance standards for participants should generally be the same as standards for similar work performed by non-participants, with adjustments for unique circumstances encountered when working at alternative workplaces. Results-oriented standards that provide a reasonable basis for evaluating job performance should be used for all employees regardless of whether or not they are participants in **DOE-Flex**.

### **What impact does DOE-Flex have on an employee's performance rating?**

Generally, evaluations of job performance for participants should be based on existing standards and expectations. In order to evaluate a participant's job performance and certify time and attendance, supervisors should establish clearly defined work assignments and expectations.

Work performance should be evaluated according to:

- Quantity and quality expectations, such as a specified number of claims processed without errors during a specified period. Employees in flexiplace arrangements should not be expected to produce any more work than is considered acceptable in the office. However, it is essential to specify the expectations for the quantity and quality of work to be produced in order to assure that DOE's overall output is not going to be compromised by flexiplace.
- Periodic progress reports, such as reporting progress on specified steps of an on-going project in which a reasonable time frame, based on past experience, has been established for each step. This applies to work for which performance and progress can be evaluated by a supervisor who has the experience and knowledge to certify and evaluate timeliness, quality, and quantity aspects of work reported by the participant.
- Other appropriate measures, such as timely completion of high quality products. If, due to the nature of the job or other circumstances, such measures are not feasible, then performance should be evaluated according to expectations developed and refined through systematic progress reporting by the participant. For example, in a situation in which the supervisor does not know how long a given work assignment should take, the supervisor can develop such expectations based on progress reports of sufficient detail and breadth; e.g., how long it took the participant to accomplish a given task. Where necessary and possible, additional information, such as how long other employees take to accomplish the same work, may be useful.

## CHAPTER III - WORK SCHEDULES AND PAY ISSUES

### **What are appropriate work schedules for DOE-Flex participants?**

Participants may work any locally-approved work schedule. Supervisors should schedule work hours in accordance with the individual employee's work requirements regardless of work location. Failure to properly schedule work may make DOE liable for premium pay under title 5, U.S.C.

The supervisor and participant should agree on the days and times that the employee will work in the main office and at the alternative workplace. The schedule can parallel those in the main office or be specific to the alternative workplace. For example, a participant who works from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm at the main office, may be assigned the same schedule when working at the alternative workplace. Alternatively, the participant may be permitted to work from 9:30 am to 6:00 pm, or some other schedule, at the alternative workplace. As long as the schedules are consistent with local policies and applicable labor contracts, the variety of such schedule combinations is unlimited and should be geared to the employee's personal and job requirements. The process of establishing work schedules should be sufficiently flexible to permit periodic adjustments, if any, to achieve an optimal schedule suiting employee and organizational requirements.

Flexiplace experts strongly suggest that it is beneficial for telecommuters to spend at least part of the workweek in their main office. It is thought that this periodic presence in the main office will minimize isolation and communication problems; give the telecommuter access to equipment, services, etc., not available at the alternate workplace; facilitate integration of the employee with those in the main office; and ease supervisor adjustment to the new work arrangement. Organizations may elect, however, to allow participants to work their full schedules at the alternative workplace, particularly when the employee is physically unable to commute.

### **How is time and attendance certified for DOE-Flex participants?**

Although agencies establish their own procedures for certifying time and attendance (see the DOE Time and Attendance Manual), those procedures must follow standards set by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) in its Policy and Procedures Manual for the Guidance of Federal Agencies (Title 6). The GAO guidelines require agencies with employees working at alternative workplaces to provide reasonable assurance that they are working when scheduled.

Such assurance can be achieved by supervisor determination of the reasonableness of work output for the time spent or by occasional supervisor telephone calls or visits during the employee's scheduled work hours at the alternative workplace. The technique of determining reasonableness of work output for the time spent is consistent with managing by results and is recommended by experts for use with **DOE-Flex**. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring time and attendance is accurately recorded and certified for **DOE-Flex** participants. Time and

attendance should be recorded as if the participants were performing their duties at their official workplaces.

**What affect does DOE-Flex have on a participant's pay and travel?**

Existing rules in title 5, U.S.C. on premium pay, hours of duty, and scheduling work apply to **DOE-Flex** just as they do for non-participants. Non-exempt participants are covered by the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Pay and travel entitlements are based on the official duty station of the participant.

**What affect do leave, dismissals, and emergency closings have on DOE-Flex participants?**

The current rules and procedures for leave administration apply to participants. The location of an employee's workplace has no impact on these rules; these rules depend on the work schedule.

The alternative workplace may be unaffected by emergencies that lead to closing and dismissals at the main office or such closings could adversely impact having support staff available to assist an employee at an alternative workplace or access to a network. As may happen with different offices in the same metropolitan area, some may be affected by the emergency and others not. The principle is the same for alternative workplaces as it is for main offices - if work can proceed at a particular workplace, then employees at that site should not be excused from duty just because other employees elsewhere have been dismissed or excused from reporting. If only the alternative workplace is affected, then the supervisor should reschedule the participant's workdays, have the participant report to the main office, grant an excused absence, i.e., administrative leave, or require the participant to take leave, as deemed appropriate.

In general, the organization responsible for operating a telecenter will have the authority and responsibility for emergency closing of the telecenter. That same organization will have the responsibility of informing affected telecommuters and their respective agencies. Local DOE organizations may establish additional reporting procedures for telecommuters affected by telecenter closings; such procedures should be spelled out in the participant's flexiplace agreement.

## **CHAPTER IV - HOME OFFICE WORKPLACE ISSUES**

### **What are the characteristics of an appropriate home office?**

Participants in **DOE-Flex** who work at home should designate a work space in their homes for the specific reason of performing official duties. The area should be free from repetitive distractions that might adversely affect a participant's performance. It should accommodate appropriate equipment needed, e.g., desk, chair, computer, answering machine, and an additional telephone line or electrical outlets, and lighting. At a minimum, participants should be able to easily communicate by telephone with their supervisors.

Alternative workplaces should be safe and must be free of hazardous materials. Participants should document, i.e., self-certify, the safety of their home workplaces. One way they may do so is by completing a safety checklist, such as the sample at Appendix D. In the event that any condition is not adequate or appears unsafe, the supervisor may disapprove the participant's request to participate until such time as the condition improves. Supervisors may want to refer the completed checklist to their Safety Officer for review and comment before approving or disapproving a request. Participants are responsible for complying with safety standards and building codes.

### **Should a home office workplace be inspected?**

Although the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) does not require employers to conduct safety inspections in homes at this time, participants should be required to permit home inspections by their organizations during the participants' normal working hours, when given reasonable, e.g., 24 hours, prior notification. The inspections are designed to ensure proper use, maintenance, and accountability of DOE-owned property and that information is being protected. When an employee is suspected of a security violation, an inspection may be unannounced during the employee's scheduled hours of work.

### **What expenses, if any, can be paid by DOE?**

Exemptions to law permit participants in **DOE-Flex** to request their organization to use appropriated funds to pay for telephone installation and basic service in their residences. There is no requirement that DOE must pay for those expenses. Expenses of operating a residence, such as utility costs associated with working at home, will normally not be reimbursed. Exceptions apply only where the personal expense directly benefits the Department, e.g., to maintain or provide insurance coverage for a participant's equipment or make business-related long distance calls on the participant's home telephone. A DOE calling card may be issued to charge long distance calls when it is not appropriate to install FTS 2000 telephone service.

**What are the procedures for getting reimbursed?**

When employees will be seeking reimbursement, prior approval from their supervisors and responsible budget officials should be obtained. After an expense is incurred, employees should complete and submit a Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business (SF-1164), with the receipt for the authorized expense, through their supervisors and budget officials to their servicing finance offices.

**Can DOE-Flex help an employee with dependent care needs?**

Flexiplace may reduce dependent care costs by reducing or eliminating the number of hours of care necessary, particularly before and after school or day care, as a result of having more time to care for dependents by not having to commute to work. Flexiplace may also permit a participant to provide assistance, such as with a noon meal, to a family member that the participant would not otherwise be able to do. The opportunity to participate in the **DOE-Flex** is offered with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the participant to make necessary arrangements for dependent care that is needed on a regular, recurring basis during agreed-upon hours of work. **DOE-Flex** should not be used as a substitute for providing regular, recurring child or other dependent care arrangements.

**What is DOE's obligation, if any, in the event that a participant is injured while working at home?**

Participants should inform their supervisors at once of any accident or injury occurring at the alternative workplace during approved working hours. Such incidents should be treated just as if they occurred at the main office; thus, participants are covered by, and may file claims under, the Federal Employees Workers' Compensation Act and the Federal Tort Claims Act.

## **CHAPTER V - PROPERTY, RECORDS, AND SECURITY ISSUES**

### **What equipment may be provided a DOE-Flex participant?**

Only DOE-owned property, including computers, other telecommunications equipment, software, and data can be installed by DOE in an alternative workplace. Participants should not be allowed to add unauthorized equipment or software without prior approval. The Department retains ownership and control of the installed hardware, software, and data. The participant's organization needs to ensure that it can account for, locate, and retrieve this equipment (see the "List of Resources for the Alternate Workplace" at Appendix B that is suggested as an attachment to a flexiplace agreement).

### **Can a participant use equipment and software for personal needs?**

Installed equipment and software should be treated as if it were in the main office in accordance with the Federal CIO Council's guidance titled "Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology," and applicable Departmental guidance.

### **What measures should a participant take to protect DOE-owned property?**

It must be protected from access by unauthorized individuals and destruction of records by viruses. Personal identification, passwords, access codes, etc., need to be accounted for and maintained properly. Physical security measures, such as installing approved anti-virus software, denying children access to the work area, or securing it when not in use, also need to be taken. Participants should notify their supervisors immediately following a malfunction of DOE-owned equipment. The Department is responsible for the maintenance, repair, replacement, and transport of such equipment; however, if DOE equipment is unsecured and consequently damaged by non-participants, i.e., dependents of the participant, participants may be held liable for equipment repair or replacement. Participants may be required to report to the main office if work-dependent equipment repairs are extensive and adversely affect their ability to accomplish work assignments. Once an arrangement is terminated, any DOE equipment and office supplies must be returned to the main office as soon as possible.

### **What is the status of any record produced at an alternative workplace?**

All records that pertain to DOE business that are created or received by the participant at an alternative workplace belong to DOE and will be managed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The records should not be removed from the alternative workplace and should not be disposed of except in accordance with applicable DOE records disposition directives.

### **Can a DOE-Flex participant work with sensitive information at an alternative workplace?**

Decisions regarding the proper use and handling of sensitive data, as well as records subject to

the Privacy Act, should be based on applicable regulations and delegated to supervisors whose participants are working in alternative workplaces. **Off-site access to sensitive data may be permitted provided automated data processing/security officials certify the adequacy of the security for such access. Classified data may not be removed from the participant's main office to an alternative workplace.**

## CHAPTER VI - REMOTE ACCESS ISSUES

This chapter focuses on and illustrates issues pertaining to the Headquarters Local Area Network (HQ LAN), including communications between Headquarters and Field Office LANs. Employees in Field Offices should contact their computer support staff to ascertain how to access their LAN.

### **Can an employee get access to e-mail via the Internet without going through the DOE HQ LAN?**

An employee can access his/her e-mail via the Internet. The mail platform (Lotus Notes, cc:Mail, or MS Exchange) will determine the path needed to access one's e-mail. An organization's AOSS support team will identify appropriate remote mail access options. For example, for the DOE MA Exchange mail system, an employee can access his/her e-mail via the Internet using either Microsoft Internet Explorer version 4.01 or higher or Netscape Navigator version 3.0 or higher. For more information and detailed instructions, visit the ACIO/OPS web site at <http://hqops.doe.gov>, click on the **E-Mail Support** button, and the **Outlook Web Access** button.

### **What does an employee need to do to get access to the DOE HQ LAN to get to data files stored on his/her desktop PC or File Server?**

An organization's AOSS support team will work with each employee to identify his/her needs and capabilities for remote access services. After this step is completed the support person will begin a process designed to deliver to the employee an optimized solution that will satisfy his/her remote computing needs. Key steps in the process include:

- Establish a Phone Access Lookup (PAL) account authorization and creation (PAL is MCI's IP Link Plus solution which allows remote users to dial into the DOE HQ network using local and 800 access numbers) through the organization's appropriate budget official.
- Coordinate setup tasks/activities with HQ LAN Operations and other technical support services providers as required.
- Install and configure remote access client software and all required applications software on the employee's laptop or home PC.
- Identify employee training needs.
- Assist in the preparation of Quick Reference Guides and other documentation the employee may need to avoid problems due to user errors.

### **When is there a cost for dial-up access to the DOE HQ network?**

There is a connection cost for dial-up access to the DOE HQ network. In almost all cases an

employee will be able to select from a nationwide list of local access numbers for connecting to the network at a low rate. In circumstances where the employee should use a toll number (800) to connect to the network, such as in a hotel where it is more convenient or where there is no local access number, the billing rate is higher.

Employees who travel abroad can still use PAL to connect to the DOE HQ network. Connection costs are billed at various international rates, plus \$.06 per minute service charge. Detailed information and instructions are available on the ACIO/OPS Web site at <http://hqops.hr.doe.gov/lanops>. Click the **remote access** down arrow, select **dial-up** from the menu, then click **GO**.

### **How compatible are Mail Platforms DOE-wide?**

Communications between Electronic Mail platforms DOE-wide allow the exchange of e-mail and file attachments. It is recommended that you find out what the best format (MS Word, WordPerfect, DOS text, graphics, etc.) is before sending a file to ensure that the recipient will be able to open the file without any difficulty.

### **How are files sent from other locations to my computer?**

Typically, files are sent as e-mail attachments to the employee's computer. However, current policy limits the file size to 5 megabytes for delivery during normal business hours. Delivery of e-mail attached files sized between 5 - 10 megabytes are delayed until after 6:00 p.m. during the business week. E-mail file attachments greater than 10 megabytes will not be delivered. In such cases both the sender and the intended recipient of the e-mail message will receive notification via a system-generated message.

There are other options available that enable the employee to send and receive files in a timely manner with no limitation on file size. The AOSS/LAN Administrator staff should be contacted to ensure that the employee's file access and transfer needs will be fully met.

### **What are alternative methods of communicating quickly with an employee at an alternate workplace?**

The ability to contact and establish effective communications with an employee away from the office environment can be accomplished by using appropriate telecommunications devices - particularly the types of devices that integrate easily with data/voice networked systems and services, such as nationwide pagers with mail messaging capability or cell phones. For more information on alternative methods, contact the telecommunications staff in the local CIO office.

### **What must an employee with some type of disability do to accommodate that need?**

The DOE Assistive Technologies Web Page provides program information about the DOE Disability Program in addition to information on current and emerging assistive technologies. Visit the CIO Web Site at <http://cio.doe.gov/assistive> to learn about computer and related telecommunications accommodations to assist persons with disabilities.

## Appendix A - Sample Flexiplace Application

Employee's Name:	
Position Title & Series:	PD No.:
Organization:	Mailcode:
Home Address:	Home Telephone No.:
Supervisor's Name:	Supervisor's Telephone No.:

<b>Type of Flexiplace Arrangement:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Situational <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Regular - _____ days per week/pay period; Medical - consult with your DOE-Flex Advisor or your Human Resources Office for more information on this program	
1. Describe the work to be performed at the alternate work site. <i>(If more space is needed, continue on the back or on a separate sheet of paper.)</i>	
2. Briefly describe how you meet the criteria for participation.	
3. Briefly describe the conduciveness of the alternative workplace for <b>DOE-Flex</b> , including office space, equipment, etc.	
4. List any resources that you will need.	
Employee Signature	Date

<b>ACTION ON APPLICATION</b>			
	Approved		Disapproved
Reason for Disapproval (if applicable)			
Supervisor's Signature		Date	
Approving/Disapproving Official's Signature		Date	
Comments			

Work schedule (official tour of duty) while participating in the **DOE-Flex** is:

Pay Period Work Week	Day	Hours		Duty Station	
		From	To	Official	Alternate
Week 1	Monday				
	Tuesday				
	Wednesday				
	Thursday				
	Friday				
Week 2	Monday				
	Tuesday				
	Wednesday				
	Thursday				
	Friday				

**Distribution**

**If approved:**

- Original - Attach to the original flexiplace agreement
- Copy to - Employee's supervisor
- DOE-Flex Advisor

**If disapproved:**

- Original - Employee
- Copy to - Employee's supervisor
- DOE-Flex Advisor

## Appendix B - Sample Flexiplace Agreement

**Introduction**

This is an employment agreement between the \_\_\_\_\_ (*organization*), Department of Energy ("Department") and its employee, \_\_\_\_\_ (*employee's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ ("you" or "your") for the purpose of specifying the terms and conditions under which you will work at the alternate workplace, specified below, a site other than your regularly assigned office location, the duty station specified below. This flexiplace arrangement is not an employee entitlement, does not change the terms and conditions of your appointment, is not a substitute for child or other dependent care arrangements, nor are you assured that this work option will continue indefinitely. This arrangement is intended to be an additional method the Department utilizes to accomplish work.

**Type of Arrangement**

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular    \_\_\_\_\_ Situational    \_\_\_\_\_ Medical    (*Mark the appropriate type(s)*)

**Effective Date, Termination, and Duration**

This agreement is effective \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*). This agreement is on a trial basis for up to \_\_\_\_\_ (*90 days*), but may be extended beyond that date, or if in effect indefinitely for a situational arrangement, upon re-certification at least semi-annually from the effective date. You may terminate this agreement at any time from the effective date by giving your supervisor notice and returning to your duty station. To ensure that you are properly accommodated at your duty station, you should provide at least \_\_\_\_\_ week(s) notice of your desire to terminate this agreement. Management has the right to terminate or modify this agreement at any time, after reasonable notice.

**Duty Station**

Your duty station is \_\_\_\_\_ (*organization's address*).

**Alternate Workplace**

Your alternate workplace is \_\_\_\_\_ (*home address, telecenter and address, and/or "while on travel"*).

**Applicable Policy and Guidelines**

The following policies, manuals, or guidelines apply: \_\_\_\_\_ (*specify all that apply, including the "Handbook on DOE-Flex", security directives, and the Privacy Act- 5 U.S.C. 552a*).

**Management's Rights**

Management has the right to terminate or modify this agreement at any time or alter your agreed-upon work schedule at any time when your supervisor determines that you are needed at your duty station due to work demands, attendance at a meeting(s) or training session(s), or other business reason.

**Your Responsibilities**

You will perform those work assignments agreed to with your supervisor in the time frame discussed, to the extent that you have control over the completion of those assignments. You will ensure that you have appropriate resources available, or access to them, to perform those assignments at the alternate workplace. You will be reasonably accessible during agreed-upon hours of work (see the attached work schedule). You will safeguard DOE equipment and records and use such equipment and records for official business. You will also safeguard,

service, and maintain your equipment, if any, used to perform your work at the alternate workplace. If your alternate workplace is your home, you will maintain it in a reasonably safe condition. You will keep your alternative workplace hazard-free and normally free from distractions. You are bound by the Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch and the Department's supplement thereto while working at your alternate workplace.

**Time and Attendance**

Your time keeper will be provided a copy of your work schedule. Normal rules and procedures apply for authorizing, approving, earning, and using leave, overtime, credit hours, compensatory time, time-off awards, etc. Your time and attendance must be reported to your time keeper and certified by your certifying official so that there is an accounting for all hours included in your agreed-upon work schedule. Your time and attendance will be reported as though you are at your duty station; however, administrative dismissals are based only on the workplace affected by the dismissal. You will obtain approval in advance for any schedule change, including work that entitles you to overtime compensation, training, and leave, except for unexpected leave situations.

**Pay, Leave, and Travel**

Your pay, leave, and travel entitlements are based on your duty station. This flexiplace arrangement is not a basis for changing your salary and benefits.

**Work Assignment(s)**

*(briefly describe the assignment(s))*

**Resources Provided**

In the event that you do not have, or have and do not wish to use, appropriate resources to accomplish your assignments, then the Department may, subject to the availability of funds, install, service, and maintain the resources listed on the attached schedule. If you have any problem with Department-supplied equipment or software, call \_\_\_\_\_ and inform your supervisor. If you utilize a laptop computer on an "as-needed" basis, you are to follow your organization's office procedures for checking it out and returning it promptly when finished. If you provide any resources, you do so at your expense, unless specifically authorized herein or otherwise in writing. Upon termination of this flexiplace arrangement, you must return all Department-supplied resources within three work days, unless the Department arranges to pick them up.

**Performance**

Your performance will be evaluated based on the quantity and quality of the work products, the progress on your assignments that you report, and any other appropriate measures, such as timeliness, responsiveness to customer needs, accessibility, etc., that your supervisor has communicated to you.

**Expenses**

You are authorized to incur the following expenses without any further prior approval:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Installation and monthly charges for an additional telephone line
- \_\_\_\_\_ Calls to access your organization's LAN
- \_\_\_\_\_ Long distance calls (\_\_\_\_\_ you will be assigned a calling card)
- \_\_\_\_\_ A maintenance agreement on (*type of equipment*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Additional insurance coverage on (*type of equipment*)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other (*describe*)

You may be reimbursed for authorized expenses. To get reimbursed, you must submit an SF-1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business, with a copy of your expenses, through your supervisor. The Department will normally not be responsible for any additional operating costs, such as home maintenance, insurance, or utilities, that are associated with your using your home as the alternate workplace.

**Liability**

You assume full responsibility for any damage to your personal or real property that may occur as a result of your working at your alternative workplace, except to the extent that DOE is held liable by the Federal Tort Claims Act or the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act. If you are injured during your authorized hours of work at your alternative workplace, you are covered by the Government's workers' compensation program. You must notify your supervisor immediately of any accident or injury that occurs at the alternate workplace and complete any required forms. The Department may investigate such a report immediately.

**Inspections**

You are subject to a physical inspection of your workplace, equipment, and records during normal working hours, upon reasonable notice, normally at least 24 hours in advance. If you are suspected of a security violation, an inspection may be unannounced, but during normal working hours.

**Effect of Failure to Fulfill the Terms of this Agreement**

This agreement will be terminated if you fail to fulfill its, or any amendment to its, terms. Termination for reasons of misconduct or failure to protect equipment, records, and/or data may result in disciplinary action and/or suspension or revocation of your security clearance, if appropriate.

**Certification**

I hereby certify that I have read and understood the terms and conditions of this agreement. I also understand that the above information is accurate as of this date, but that applicable policies and guidelines may change or be added without amending this agreement accordingly. In the event of such changes, I agree that this agreement will be subject to them.

_____	_____
Employee	Date
_____	_____
Supervisor	Date
_____	_____
Approving Official	Date

**Attachments:**

List of Resources for Alternative Workplace  
 Self-Certification Safety Checklist  
 Application or Work Schedule

## List of Resources for the Alternative Workplace

1. \_\_\_\_ Computer (serial or property number \_\_\_\_\_)
2. \_\_\_\_ Monitor (serial or property number \_\_\_\_\_)
3. \_\_\_\_ Printer (serial or property number \_\_\_\_\_)
4. \_\_\_\_ Modem (serial or property number \_\_\_\_\_)
5. \_\_\_\_ Fax machine (serial or property number \_\_\_\_\_)
6. \_\_\_\_ Additional telephone line (type of monthly service plan \_\_\_\_\_)
7. \_\_\_\_ Software (specify)
8. \_\_\_\_ Office supplies, such as paper, printer ribbons, diskettes, envelopes, tape, staples, etc.
9. \_\_\_\_ Other (describe)

### PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Section 6120 of Title 5 to the United States Code and Executive Memorandum of July 11, 1994 (59 FR 36017) authorizes collection of this information. Providing information and signing this agreement is voluntary, but failure to sign this agreement will preclude the authorization of an alternative workplace other than your regularly assigned location and will result in you not being approved for the employment arrangement specified herein. The primary use of the information contained in this agreement is by applicable management officials and supporting administrative staffs, payroll and accounting staffs, human resource staffs, and travel and transportation staffs to approve and record the benefits and entitlements of this employment situation. There are no additional uses that may be made of the information collected in the agreement. The official copy of this agreement is maintained in your Official Personnel File, which is a category of record included in the OPM/GOVT-1 General Personnel Records system.

#### Distribution of

##### Entire Agreement:

- Original - Employee's OPF
- Copy to - Employee
  - Supervisor
  - DOE-Flex Advisor

##### Work Schedule:

- Copy to - Time Keeper

## Appendix C - Sample One-Time Situational Flexiplace Agreement

**Introduction** This is an employment agreement between the \_\_\_\_\_ (*organization*), Department of Energy ("Department") and its employee, \_\_\_\_\_ (*employee's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ ("you" or "your") for the purpose of specifying the terms and conditions under which you will work at the alternate workplace, specified below, a site other than your regularly assigned office location.

**Dates or Duration and Assignment** This agreement will be in effect \_\_\_\_\_ (*dates: from/to or number of days*) in order to complete the following assignment(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternate Workplace** Your alternate workplace is \_\_\_\_\_ (*your home or the (specify) telecenter*) and you can be contacted at the following phone number: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Work Schedule** Your work schedule will be: \_\_\_\_\_ (*specify the hours that the employee will work and be accessible to the supervisor*) \_\_\_\_\_.

**Resources** You are expected to use \_\_\_\_\_ (*your own equipment or a loaned laptop from the office*) to accomplish your assignment(s). You \_\_\_\_\_ (*are/are not*) authorized to incur any costs associated with connecting to the local LAN in order to communicate with your office and/or accomplish your assignment(s).

**Your Responsibilities** You will perform the work assignment(s) specified herein in the time frame specified, to the extent that you have control over the completion of the assignment(s). You will ensure that you have appropriate resources available, or access to them, to perform the assignment(s) at the alternate workplace. You will be reasonably accessible during agreed-upon hours of work. You will safeguard DOE equipment and records and use such equipment and records for official business. You will also safeguard, service, and maintain your equipment, if any, used to perform your work at the alternate workplace. If your alternate workplace is your home, you will maintain it in a reasonably safe condition. You will keep your alternative workplace hazard-free and normally free from distractions. You are bound by the Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch and the Department's supplement thereto while working at your alternate workplace, and the applicable policy and guidance pertaining to flexiplace arrangements.

**Signatures and Dates**

_____	_____
Employee	Date
_____	_____
Supervisor	Date
_____	_____
Approving Official	Date

## PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Section 6120 of Title 5 to the United States Code and Executive Memorandum of July 11, 1994 (59 FR 36017) authorizes collection of this information. Providing information and signing this agreement is voluntary, but failure to sign this agreement will preclude the authorization of an alternative workplace other than your regularly assigned location and will result in you not being approved for the employment arrangement specified herein. The primary use of the information contained in this agreement is by applicable management officials and supporting administrative staffs, payroll and accounting staffs, human resource staffs, and travel and transportation staffs to approve and record the benefits and entitlements of this employment situation. There are no additional uses that may be made of the information collected in the agreement. The official copy of this agreement is maintained in your Official Personnel File, which is a category of record included in the OPM/GOVT-1 General Personnel Records system.

### Distribution:

- Original - Employee's OPF
- Copy to - Employee
  - Supervisor
  - DOE-Flex Advisor
  - Time Keeper

## Appendix D - Sample Self-Certification Safety Checklist

<b>Part I - Workplace Environment</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Are temperature, noise, ventilation and lighting levels adequate for maintaining your normal level of job performance?		
2. Are all stairs with four or more steps equipped with handrails?		
3. Are all circuit breakers and/or fuses in the electrical panel labeled as to intended service?		
4. Do circuit breakers clearly indicate if they are in the open or closed position?		
5. Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards that would cause physical harm (frayed wires, bare conductors, loose wires, flexible wires running through walls, exposed wires to the ceiling)?		
6. Will the building's electrical system permit the grounding of electrical equipment?		
7. Are aisles, doorways, and corners free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement?		
8. Are file cabinets and storage closets arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways?		
9. Are chairs free of any loose casters (wheels) and are the rungs and legs of the chairs sturdy?		
10. Are the phone lines, electrical cords, and extension wires secured under a desk or alongside a baseboard?		
11. Is the office space neat, clean, and free of excessive amounts of combustibles?		
12. Are floor surfaces clean, dry, level, and free of worn or frayed seams?		
13. Are carpets well secured to the floor and free of frayed or worn seams?		
14. Is there enough light for reading?		



## Appendix E - Sample Semi-Annual Re-Certification

Employee's Name:						Supervisor's Name:				
<b>RE-CERTIFICATION -- at least every 6 months</b> Type of Flexiplace: <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Situational <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Regular - _____ days per week/pay period; Medical - consult with Human Resources Office for details.										
For regularly scheduled Flexiplace participants, list the employee's established work schedule below. Indicate in the last row if the work site is at the office (O) or the Flexiplace (F) site. Please be sure to include a ½ hour unpaid lunch period for each work day.										
Hours	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Start										
End										
Site										
<b>The following checklist is designed to help you assess an employee's eligibility to continue in the DOE-Flex.</b>										
								Yes	No	
1.	Do the work assignments and responsibilities of the employee's current position warrant continued participation?									
2.	Is the employee's most recent performance rating Fully Successful or higher?									
3.	Does the employee demonstrate the ability to work independently?									
4.	Is the employee able to maintain the quality and quantity of his or her work?									
	Approved			Disapproved. Reason:						
I have reviewed and discussed the re-certification criteria and decision with the employee.										
Supervisor's Signature						Date				
Employee's Signature						Date				

**Distribution:**
**If approved:**

- Original - Attach to the original Flexiplace Agreement in the employee's OPF
- Copy to - Employee
  - Supervisor
  - Time Keeper
  - DOE-Flex Advisor

**If disapproved:**

- Original - Employee
- Copy to - DOE-Flex Advisor

## Appendix F - Pitfalls to Avoid

The following are examples of some of the common pitfalls and traps of a flexiplace arrangement with possible ways of avoiding them.

Situation	Consider This Alternative
1. Supervisor plans important meetings scheduled on employee's flexiplace days.	1. Set up a conference call so the employee can participate in the meetings from his/her alternate workplace.
2. Co-workers don't know when the employee will be in the office or accessible by other means. There is a general sense that the employee is never around.	2. Ensure that the employee's schedule is available to co-workers so they have access to it and will know when the employee will be in the office, working at home, on travel, or on leave, and when the employee has an AWS day off.
3. Managers and employees do not have a clear understanding of work expectations.	3. Define work expectations in advance to avoid misunderstanding.
4. Supervisors and co-workers are not able to contact, or are unclear on how or when to contact, the employee (and are sometimes actively discouraged). There is a general reluctance to call employees at home on their flexiplace days.	4. Provide staff with flexiplace phone number. Encourage staff to call or e-mail employee on flexiplace days. Supervisors should set an example by calling employees on their flexiplace days and insisting that others continue to transact business with employees working at their alternate workplace.
5. Employees are reluctant to leave the phone on their flexiplace days, even to use the restroom or take a break, because someone who called might not think they are not working.	5. Employees should use an answering machine to take messages during absences and then follow up with callers promptly upon return.
6. Employee feels a sense of isolation and loss of interaction with co-workers.	6. If necessary, increase the number of days per week in the central office. Encourage active communication via e-mail or telephone.
7. Flexiplace is joked about as "goofing off." Flexiplace days are referred to by co-workers as "days off."	7. Explain or distribute benefits of flexiplace to staff members. Publicize the products that the flexiplace employee produces while at the alternate workplace.

<p>8. Work and home needs are difficult to distinguish while working at home.</p>	<p>8. To the extent possible, keep the office space separate from the rest of the living area. Keep a definite schedule of work time and personal time and stick to it.</p>
<p>9. The organization incurs additional expenses associated with the provision of equipment and services, such as telephone charges for computer connections and long distance calls.</p>	<p>9. Weigh costs against direct and indirect savings. Include any reduction in space costs plus productivity gains, skill retention, employee satisfaction, etc.</p>
<p>10. Employees run into technical problems with their computers at home and no one is available to assist them.</p>	<p>10. Ensure adequate support is available before finalizing a flexiplace arrangement. Establish procedures for call-in trouble shooting.</p>

## Appendix G - Secretary Richardson's Memorandum

March 15, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

FROM: BILL RICHARDSON

SUBJECT: Energy Flexiplace (DOE-Flex Program)

The United States is in an unprecedented era of growth and prosperity, thanks to the ingenuity and productivity of America's work force. Companies leading the way in the new economy have taken to heart this lesson: understanding and responding to workers' needs and concerns is the foundation for earning their trust and committed work effort. These are not just nice things to do; they make good business sense and show up in bottom line results that all organizations are seeking. Particularly in today's labor market, we are seeing vast differences in the make-up of family lifestyles and demands as well as the diversity of our country's workers. Employers cannot attract, retain and motivate an effective work force if they are not responsive to quality of worklife issues.

As a Department, we are among the leaders in implementing a variety of family friendly programs, including flexible work schedules, employee health and assistance, and family friendly leave. My goal is to become a model Federal agency in the use of Flexiplace. This goal is directly tied to and supportive of one of the Department's primary missions that is energy conservation. It also makes practical sense, because organizations that use Flexiplace have found that many types of work can be done productively away from the office setting. Finally, most employees of this Department have demonstrated that they will act responsibly in using the workplace flexibilities they are given to accomplish the public's business.

For all of the above reasons, it is my belief and policy that:

*People are the Department of Energy's most important resource, and we will develop, motivate, and support them in accomplishing our missions. Employees are more than just the jobs they do, and the Department is committed to helping them meet their responsibilities on the job, at home, and in their communities. In doing so, the Department will establish flexible work arrangements that improve the quality of employees' work life and contribute to a cleaner environment and a safer, more productive workplace.*

In becoming a model employer regarding Flexiplace in the Federal sector, I am initiating the following actions:

**1. Implement a new Department of Energy Flexiplace Program (DOE-Flex) based on the best practices in Industry and Government**

I have asked Mr. David M. Klaus, Director of Management and Administration to coordinate the establishment of this new program and ensure that it is in place by March 31, 2000. DOE-Flex will provide greater opportunities for employees to request Flexiplace arrangements, and will feature:

- ▶ issuance of a new departmental DOE-Flex Handbook to assist employees, supervisors, and managers to better understand when and how to utilize Flexiplace
- ▶ written agreements between employees and their managers that spell out the responsibilities of both regarding measurable performance standards to be met, provision of supporting technology and work tools, establishment of an appropriate out-of-office work site, security and safeguarding of work materials, conditions under which DOE-Flex arrangements may be modified or discontinued, and so forth
- ▶ identification of DOE-Flex Advisors at Headquarters and in every major DOE field office, to assist in program implementation and advise employees, supervisors, and managers
- ▶ provision of training (including discussion of issues relating to security and safeguards) for supervisors, managers, and employees who are interested in using the DOE-Flex program
- ▶ emphasis on use of DOE-Flex to allow employees to work away from the office on a temporary, short-term basis to complete discrete projects and work assignments
- ▶ expanded use of technology to support Flexiplace
- ▶ establishment of alternative work sites at the Germantown and Forrestal facilities to allow Headquarters DOE employees to build some increased flexibility into their work lives.

My objective for the Department is to exceed the President's Management Council FY 2002 goal of 15 percent Federal-wide employee participation in Flexiplace programs. As interim goals, DOE organizations are challenged to have at least 5 percent of DOE employees taking advantage of Flexiplace by the end of FY 2000, and 10 percent by the end of FY 2001.

**2. Engage DOE Unions in discussions and/or negotiations about expanded use of Flexiplace**

Consistent with my recent guidance concerning Labor/Management partnership, I am asking unions and management around the Department to consider ways in which Flexiplace can be expanded, using the techniques of partnership and collective bargaining to generate ideas and strategies at local DOE work sites. Within Headquarters, we recently completed a successful pilot Flexiplace program developed in coordination with the National Treasury Employees Union. Overall, the pilot resulted in increased productivity and a decrease in sick leave usage without any loss of quality of work.

**3. Request Support of DOE Contractors and Laboratories**

I am asking DOE contractors and laboratories to make greater use of Flexiplace in carrying out their responsibilities and to report their plans and accomplishments in this regard to the Director of Management and Administration, starting on June 1, 2000.

**4. Secretarial Awards for best practices supporting Flexiplace**

I will establish a program of Secretarial Awards for DOE-Flex achievements. For this first year, we will be looking at plans and initial actions taken to expand use of Flexiplace by DOE employees and to meet our participation targets. The first awards ceremony will take place this fall, following issuance of guidelines and awards criteria.

It is my hope and expectation that the effect of these and future efforts will be to make the Department of Energy a model "employer of choice" whose enlightened policies support us in serving the American people more effectively. By listening to and working with our employees and their union representatives, I believe we will succeed.

This policy memorandum is a starting place and will be supplemented by communications from me and others as we further develop this initiative. The Director of Management and Administration will take the lead in guiding and monitoring the overall effort, and he will be keeping me informed of our progress and opportunities for further program enhancements.

## Appendix H - Resources

The program office that is principally responsible for the issuance of this publication is the Office of Personnel Policy and Planning, Office of Human Resources Management. The author can be contacted at [bruce.murray@hq.doe.gov](mailto:bruce.murray@hq.doe.gov) or by calling (202) 586-3372.

Because each Departmental Element has different information systems, each Office of Chief Information Officer is responsible for providing access to local information from remote workplaces. In Headquarters, employees should contact their respective computer support staff. Information about remote access at Headquarters is available at <http://hqops.hr.doe.gov/lanops>. For information on accessing e-mail at Headquarters via the Internet at no cost to DOE, see <http://hqops.hr.doe.gov/emailserv/index.html>. For employees with disabilities that may need to be accommodated, information is available at <http://cio.doe.gov/assistive/>.

The Office of Personnel Management has several helpful resources available at <http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/telecomm/telecomm.htm>. These and related materials are available through the Family-Friendly Workplace Advocacy Office.

The General Services Administration has helpful information available on the government's flexiplace/telecommuting program at <http://www.gsa.gov/pbs/owi/telecenters.htm> and <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mp/library/policydocs/mworkplce.htm>.

The International Telework Association and Council (ITAC) provides conferences, training, and information on telecommuting. ITAC's web site is <http://www.telecommute.org>.

A comprehensive list of resources is available at [www.gilgordon.com](http://www.gilgordon.com). Gil Gordon has been a consultant to DOE on the expansion of its program.

Another extensive list of resources, including books, magazines, Internet sites, and Associations, is available throughout the book *The Telecommuter's Advisor, Working in the Fast Lane* by June Langhoff and at <http://www.langhoff.com>.

The Telework Collaborative, which is a training and educational services partnership comprised of telework program officials of the states of AZ, CA, OR, TX, and WA, has produced a set of high quality videos, partially funded with a grant from DOE, that can be used to train, or supplement other training materials, for managers and employees. The set of videos is available in the Office of Human Resources Policy and Planning, on a loaner basis.

Chapter 5 of *The Telecommuter's Handbook* by Brad and Deborah Schepp, titled "75 Jobs for Telecommuters," provides a way to determine if an existing position would work in a telecommuting capacity and a rating scheme that shows how well suited a particular job may be for telecommuting.