

Safety Newsletter



Central Region
School Insurance Group

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

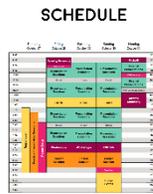
Spring 2020

Working Safely at Home During Covid-19 Shelter-in-Place Order

On March 11, 2019 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic with the Coronavirus now identified as COVID-19. This public health crisis has forced countries to go under quarantine to socially distance ourselves from one another in a conscious effort to minimize exposure. California, has taken stringent measures to shelter-in-place. Many school district offices have remained open and in production with their employees working remotely from home, whenever possible. However, working from home is a different experience and many may not be prepared for the challenges that come with remote work. Waking up to go to work in an office is far different from waking up and having the option to work from bed or the couch. If you're new to working remotely, these tips can help you stay productive and maintain balance.

Set a schedule and carve out actual work hours.

Set a schedule, and stick to it...most of the time. Having clear guidelines for when to work and when to call it a day helps many remote workers maintain work-life balance. That said, one of the benefits of remote work is flexibility, and sometimes you need to extend your day or start early to accommodate someone else's time zone. When you do, be sure to wrap up earlier than usual or sleep in a bit the next morning to make up for it.



Many would be tempted to work loosely throughout the day, besides isn't that the luxury of working from home? Although flexibility is a bonus, setting clear boundaries for when to work and when to take care of personal matters will help with productivity along with managing a work-life balance. Work-life balance refers to the prioritization between personal and professional activities. An individual can experience a certain amount of stress when this balance has been skewed especially if working from home causes more challenges with productivity due to personal distractions such as children who are also home

Setting a schedule may include you keeping to the same work schedule you had when you were working at the office. This may mean waking up at the same time in the morning, taking the same number of breaks and ending the workday around the same time you used to get off work from the office. However, you don't have to be that stringent

and stick to the exact hours. If there is flexibility in setting your hours when working from home, take advantage of it. Taking care of children and also coordinating work time and space with a partner or spouse, who is also working from home, may require you to adjust your hours. This will help you to achieve your work-life balance and keep harmony in your home. Automatic time-tracking apps, such as "RescueTime", let you check in on whether you're sticking to your schedule. They can also help you figure out what times of day you're most productive versus when you slack off. You can use that information to your advantage by reserving your hours of high focus for your most important tasks.

Set ground rules and make an agreement with those who are home with you during your set work hours.

It is important that your kids, and even pets, understand when to not disturb you. In an office setting, there is a certain amount of etiquette that is understood and practiced. When an office door is closed it often means the person inside must be having a confidential meeting or phone call and should be left alone. If the conference room door is closed you are not to enter. If a person is on the phone you wait and come back when the person is done speaking on the phone. Unfortunately, this may not be the case when you work from home because home rules are so different from office rules. Kids may be used to playing in the same room with you as you work on your laptop. In addition, your kids are likely used to you taking personal phone calls while you are home. Kids think that when you're home, you're on the phone with Dad, Mom, or Grandma – and, these are all people your kids would also love to speak to. They may not understand the concept that you are speaking to your boss about the high-profile task you're working on.



So where do you start? First, communicate with your household that you have set hours and also set ground rules. For example, you can set a ground-rule in regards to when

to not be disturbed. So, when the door is closed, others should not just open and walk in without permission. These ground rules will look different for each household and each family as it is something everyone must agree upon or else it will not work. The real challenge may be communicating you need space with your pets.



Wake up each morning and actually get ready for work!

The prospect of working in your pajamas and bunny slippers might have excited you and perhaps was even thought of as a bonus of working from home. However, creating a morning routine that includes getting out of your sleep clothes and into some other presentable attire will help mentally prepare you to get into work mode. Not to mention that with current technology in place many of us may have to participate in video conference calls such as Skype or Face Time. You want to always be prepared and not be caught off guard. Of course, there is some built in flexibility to this. This step would be helpful for those who find it difficult to get their morning started or for those who cannot set strong boundaries with separating personal time from work time. The act of getting dressed may help move the sluggish morning along.



Work in a dedicated workspace. Unfortunately, not everyone has a separate office in their home. This is where you will need to make do with what you have, which can pose a challenge to separating yourself from distractions.

- If you are using your bedroom as an office space, try to avoid working in bed.
- If you are working from a laptop set it up on a table or desk and sit in an actual chair.
- Close the door while working for fewer distractions and more privacy.
- It is best to use an external keyboard and mouse with your laptop to allow for ease of use and avoid bad posture which comes with hunching over the laptop.
- Lastly, the laptop should also sit on top of a monitor stand so that the screen can be elevated to eye level.

Take breaks to stretch, have lunch, or simply to take a breather.

It is important to remember that you must pace yourself. This includes taking the necessary breaks. Manage your time so that you can take stretches away from the computer. Ensure you are building in time to have lunch away from the computer. It is even wise to try to step out and get a breath of fresh air if you are capable of doing so while still being able to practice social distancing. Your body needs to move. Plus, the fresh air and natural light will do you good. Regardless of where you work, the best thing you can do for your body is to change positions frequently and take breaks to move around. One good strategy is 20 minutes of sitting, 8 minutes of standing, and 2 minutes of moving around.



Learn to log off completely at the end of your workday this means turning off your computer so that you can avoid checking emails at all hours of the night when you should be sleeping. If you are not required to be on call, turn off the notifications on your emails from your smart phone. Everyone who works remotely has to figure out when to work, where to work, and how to create boundaries between work and personal life.

Don't short-change yourself during breaks, especially your lunch hour. You can use an app, such as, "TimeOut" for Mac and "SmartBreak" for Windows, to lock yourself out of your computer for 60 minutes. Or you can just launch a simple clock or timer on the screen when you take a break. If you return to your desk after only 40 minutes, walk away for another 20.

Working remotely requires you to overcommunicate. When you finish a project or important task, say so. Overcommunicating doesn't necessarily mean you have to write a five-paragraph essay to explain your every move, but it may mean repeating yourself.

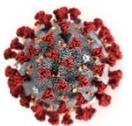
Be Positive. Less face time with people, the less they know how to interpret tone in writing. When you work remotely full-time, you must be positive, to the point where it may feel like you're being overly positive. Otherwise, you risk sounding like a jerk. It's unfortunate, but true.

The most successful remote employees have a reputation for being extremely disciplined. After all, it takes serious focus to do any full-time office job from an unconventional space. That said, everyone lets their attention drift sometimes. If you find yourself working one minute and watching YouTube the next, don't reprimand yourself too harshly. Cut yourself some slack, then get back to work.

These are unprecedented times and we are all on the edge of our seats waiting to see what will happen next. Stay connected to your coworkers and your supervisor so that you can continue receiving the support that you need and help keep you on track and focused on what you can be in control of, your work.

Above all else, figure out what works best for you. Sometimes the answer is apparent, but other times you might need some inspiration from other people who are in the same boat.

Also, don't forget to wash your hands, wash your hands and then wash your hands some more. The good news is that the Coronavirus has a lipid coat – and that is easily dealt with by using soap and water.



Together we can all get through this.