



COVID-19 Updates: Working from Home

The Next Three Seconds Protects Your Life, Your Loved Ones, Your Livelihood®

The N3L3 philosophy:

our approach to
protecting workers
from fatal and life-
changing events.

*Eastern Alliance is here
to help. To learn more
about Eastern's N3L3
program and access
other safety resources,
sign in and visit the
Safety Tools on
www.easternalliance.com,
or contact your
Risk Management
Consultant for assistance*

1.855.533.3444

Eastern Alliance continues to actively monitor COVID-19 and implementing practices to promote the health and safety for all. As we all venture through this time we are dedicated to helping our valued policyholders effectively manage their risks as they adapt to changing environments.

In response to recent developments of COVID-19 people are encouraged to practice social distancing, or “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distances from others when possible” as defined by the CDC. Leading health organizations recognize full-time remote work to be an effective method to slowing the spread of the novel coronavirus. Many employers have heeded the warning, and are doing their part to encourage social distancing by transitioning to work-from-home or remote work practice where possible to protect the health and well-being of their employees and the general public. As a result of these temporary solutions, many companies will have new risks and exposures to consider and control to keep your employees safe. It is equally important to recognize that even if your company has previously offered a remote work access prior to the current events, it is likely that the number of employees provided this access has significantly increased; resulting in an increase of exposures that need to be addressed.

It may come as a surprise to many that injuries that occur in a home office may be compensable. In general, if an employee is injured in the course and scope of their work the injury may be compensable regardless of the location. There is no clear cut, concise way to define the scenarios in which home office injuries are compensable under workers compensation as every state and every incident is different. Instead we encourage you to take a proactive approach to keeping employees safe on the job, wherever they may be. For many employees and employers alike this is an unfamiliar transition that may require extra time and resources to make for a safe work environment and Eastern is here to help.

Preparing to Work Remotely

As your employees transition to working from home it is encouraged that you create an easy list reminding them of the actions to take and items to retrieve. This will not only prepare them to be successful in their home work environment and stabilize business interruptions, but it will also prevent additional “work-related” trips to and from the office. A few items to consider:

- Bring a suitable bag, cart, or box to pack up the items you need.
- Ensure you have your laptop, power cord, and any other computer accessories you may need. Don't forget your keyboard and mouse for easier remote work!
- Pack working documents, a copy of company directory or other important phone numbers, and any other helpful resources such as IT information for connecting at home. Don't forget any office supplies you may need.



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- Set up call forwarding or change voicemail message, as appropriate.
- Remove all perishable food items from your desk and break room fridge.
- Wipe down your desk and dispose of trash.

Working From Home

Remind employees that many of the safety practices of the regular office transition well into their home office. Below are some considerations for home office safety:

- **Work Station Safety** – It is important to understand that many employees may not be equipped with ergonomic desks and chairs in their home offices. Consider the information below to ensure a maximum ergonomic work station set-up.
 - Select a designated work area that is as close as possible to a normal office set-up, meaning it includes a desk like surface and a chair. Avoid working from the couch or in a slouched position. Sitting upright at a desk enables better posture.
 - Place your monitor or laptop on a table or desk set at the appropriate height. The monitor should be set at eye level and 18-24 inches away directly in front of you.
 - Your chair should be low enough to allow your feet to be placed on the ground.
 - Your mouse and keyboard should be flat on your work surface and placed on the same surface level.
 - Vary tasks, if possible, to avoid using a specific body part for a long period of time.
 - Take mini-breaks and stretch throughout the day.
 - Clean/disinfect the keyboard, mouse, phone and other items used daily to reduce the presence or spread of germs or viruses.
- **Slips, Trips, And Falls** – A common cause of injury for remote employees are slips, trips, and falls. An injury resulting from a fall can be both life-changing and life-threatening. Consider taking the following steps to aid in reducing the probability of a slip, trip or fall injury.
 - Educate employees on the importance of keeping computer wires tucked away to reduce a trip and fall exposure.
 - Keep briefcases, backpacks, and purses away from your feet while sitting at your work station.
 - Monitor floors throughout the living space for obstructions or spills and fix/clean them as they arise.
 - Ensure that your chair is working properly, if screws feel loose or unstable, tighten the screws or replace the chair immediately.
 - Keep exit routes clear of any obstructions to ensure safe exit upon an emergency.



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- **Communication** – Remote work can cause a strain on the level of communication between employees. It is important to understand that increasing communication can help employees with a smooth transition to remote work.
 - Consider holding frequent call-in meetings to provide employees with a platform to discuss issues they may be having with the remote transition.
 - Use a headset or speaker phone rather than holding the handset of your phone next to your ear.
 - Ensure employees have a quiet space to work productively and hold professional conversations.
 - Communicate needs such as broken equipment that may need to be fixed or replaced to continue productive and safe work at home.
 - Take periodic breaks throughout the day to get fresh air and allow yourself the opportunity to refocus, if needed.
- **Productivity**– Remote work does not have to result in lost productivity! Operations may vary from their typical course but productivity can remain optimal and thriving. Employers can share these tips to keep workers engaged and productive.
 - Maintain your routine and schedule as much as possible. Get up, shower, get dressed, eat breakfast and continue your routine as you normally would during a work week. Don't forget to keep your usual night routine as well.
 - Designate an assigned work area in your home that is separate from potential distractions. Even though it is only temporary, designating your home office space helps keep you on task and maintain the home/work balance.
 - Combat feelings of isolation and seek new ways for social interaction. Pick up the phone and have a quick chat with a coworker.
 - Take breaks as you would normally in the workplace. Get up, walk around, and get fresh air. These breaks are good for the mind and body!
 - Use to-do lists to stay on track! You might have more distractions in a home office then you would typically encounter at work. A to-do list is a great tool for getting back on track.

Making this difficult transition from an office work setting to a remote work practice increases exposures and can cause a strain on employees. It is important to take the time to communicate these new exposures with your employees, and to educate them on how to identify and control the exposures. Increasing communication channels and working through the problems together will aid in keeping this temporary solution a productive one for your business.