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Working From Home - Safely and Productively

Among many other disruptions, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way municipalities are conducting business. With the CDC's social distancing recommendations and Governor Scott's Stay Home, Stay Safe executive order, many employees are having to work from home. For some, it is unfamiliar territory that requires significant adaptation. To help home-based employees be productive and safe, we at PACIF Loss Control have compiled some simple productivity and health tips as well as resources for how to set up and adjust a home workstation.

We encourage all PACIF members to read the information here and share the resources below with their home-based employees.

Productivity, Mindset, and Focus

Employees who have never worked from home but must suddenly do so will often find it an odd experience. They may miss the social aspects of working in an office, and they may be distracted by pets, school-age children, and other interruptions that are not present at the office. **While it is always important that the employer establish regular communications and expectations for all at-home employees, doing so is particularly crucial for those who have little previous experience in working from home.** One-to-one communication, conference calls, video conferencing, and use of Microsoft Teams or other applications are all examples of effective communication tools whose use can lessen the feeling of being isolated.

In this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, it is important for everyone to get adequate rest, exercise when they can, and maintain their mental wellness. The persistent pandemic-related news can be overwhelming. Talking with family, friends, and co-workers plays an important role in one's overall mental wellbeing. We remind all employees that they and their household members still have access to your employee assistance program, InvestEAP, during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Information on its range of resources are available at [vlct.org/eap](https://www.vlct.org/eap) [1], and you can call them 24/7 at 800-287-2173.**

Workstation and Adjacent Area

Not every home has a dedicated space for an office, so employees may need to set up their computer in

an unusual location. That said, it is still important that employees create the best possible work environment for themselves to keep them more comfortable and productive.

Finding an area that minimizes distractions, has decent lighting, and reduces external glare are all important considerations when working with a computer or laptop. Oregon OSHA has written a guide called [Evaluating Your Computer Workspace](#) [2] which provides some good examples of desirable – and undesirable – workstation arrangements. Federal OSHA also offers a [Computer Workstations eTool](#) [3] which provides a wealth of information on good working positions, workstation components, and other important elements. We encourage employees to review these information sources and apply the concepts to their home work environment.

PACIF members and their employees can contact their loss control consultant if they have any questions about how to make their home workstation more ergonomically friendly. Consultants are assigned by municipality, as noted in [this color-keyed map](#) [4]. You may contact them directly or email us at losscontrol@vlct.org [5].

Documents:

 [Tips for Employees on Working From Home Safely and Productively](#) [6]

Links:

[Oregon OSHA's Evaluating Your Computer Workspace](#) [2]

[OSHA's Computer Workstation eTool](#) [3]

[Remote Working Best Practices – 4/3/20 webinar by Michael Kilfoyle](#) [7]

Resource Category:

- Guidance

Links

[1] <http://www.vlct.org/eap>

[2] <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHAPubs/1863.pdf>

[3] <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html>

[4] <https://www.vlct.org/sites/default/files/documents/Resource/LCTerrMap2020.pdf>

[5] <mailto:losscontrol@vlct.org>

[6] https://www.vlct.org/sites/default/files/documents/Resource/PACIF_COVID19_WorkingSafelyAtHome.pdf

[7] <http://www.vlct.org/node/15302>