

Working From Home – Safely and Productively

Guidance for Municipal Employees from VLCT PACIF Loss Control

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 these simple productivity and health tips and identified two excellent resources for setting up a home workstation that won't create physical strain for the user. We encourage all home-based employees to explore these resources and implement the concepts.

Productivity, Mindset, and Focus

If you have never worked from home before, you might find it an odd experience. You may miss the social aspects of working in an office, or find that you are easily distracted by pets, school-age children, and other interruptions that aren't present at the office. It is really important to stay in contact with colleagues using whatever communication tools are available. In addition to email, use more one-to-one phone calls and get the hang of conference calls, video conferencing, and chatting with Microsoft Teams or instant messaging with other applications. All can be a big help – not only for doing your job but also for lessening a sense of isolation.

In this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, it is important for us all to get adequate rest, exercise when possible, and maintain our mental wellness. The persistent pandemic-related news can be distressing and overwhelming. Talking with family, friends, and co-workers plays an important role in one's overall mental wellbeing. If that's not enough (or if that's part of a problem), remember that one of your employee benefits is access to counseling – and support for other personal concerns – through an employee assistance program (EAP) called Invest EAP. Especially during this COVID-19 pandemic, you can **call 800-287-2173 at any time of any day** to start seeking free and confidential assistance. The same is true for all members of your household. **Information on the range of free resources and instructions for accessing the Invest EAP website are available at vlct.org/eap.**

Workstation and Adjacent Area

Not every home has a dedicated space for an office, so you might need to set up your computer in an unusual location. Even so, it's really important to put some time and attention into creating your best possible workstation so you can work comfortably and productively.

Find an area that minimizes distractions, has decent lighting, and reduces external glare on your computer screen. Also position your desk, monitor, keyboard & mouse, and chair so that your body and eyes aren't straining while you work. Oregon OSHA has written an excellent guide called [Evaluating Your Computer Workspace](#) which provides some good examples of desirable – and undesirable – workstation arrangements. Federal OSHA also offers a [Computer Workstation eTool](#) which has a wealth of information on good working positions, workstation components, and other important factors. Use information from both of these resources as you set up and adjust your home office area.

If you have any questions about how to make your home workstation more ergonomically friendly, either find your municipality [on this color-coded map](#) and contact your PACIF Loss Control Consultant directly, or email the team at losscontrol@vlct.org. We are happy to help!