



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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# Message from the Office of Human Resources

March 13, 2020 — Sent Systemwide

Today, Gov. Walz issued a declaration of a "peacetime emergency" for the state and [President Gabel sent an email regarding the health and safety of our University community given the current situation.](#)

The University of Minnesota is committed to ensuring workplace health and safety. In light of that commitment and the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and in consultation with President Gabel, I advise that University employees may work from home or another remote location as operations allow, with approval from their supervisor. Working remotely is not new, but because some employees and supervisors have never done so, this email will help you navigate potential scenarios.

We are basing our guidance on the [strategies shared by the Minnesota Department of Health for employers](#) to:

- Encourage staff to telework when feasible, particularly individuals with underlying medical conditions.
- Implement social distancing measures. This can include increasing the physical space between people at work, staggering work schedules, and limiting social contacts in the workplace such as in-person meetings.
- Limit large work-related gatherings such as staff meetings and after-work functions.
- Require workers who are ill to stay home.

The Office of Human Resources' guidance is to help supervisors, employees, and departments set up temporary remote work arrangements quickly and successfully. In determining if remote work is appropriate, supervisors and employees need to consider the following:

- **Remote work requires supervisor approval.** Supervisors need to consult and talk with their employees regarding any plans to work remotely. Some work at the University may not be suitable for remote work.
- **Considerations for working remotely need to be discussed in advance.** This includes work responsibilities and expectations, schedules, equipment, and supplies.
- **Supervisors need to ensure that they continue to engage and communicate regularly with the people who report to them.** Additionally, supervisors should articulate clear procedures regarding check-in times and hours of availability. With proper planning, communications problems associated with remote work can be minimized.
- **Needs will change as the situation evolves.** Supervisors and their direct reports will need to remain in close communication while working remotely.
- **Department leadership and supervisors need to be aligned** in executing remote working arrangements.

Additional information and guidance for supervision and employees will be added to the [Office of Human Resources workplace guidance for COVID-19.](#)

**Helpful Resources:**

- [OIT's guidelines for Duo and VPN access from off-site](#)

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Horstman  
Interim Vice President