

Questions and Answers for Civilian Personnel on the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19)

Q1: What if civilian employees traveling abroad fall ill while on temporary duty travel (TDY)? Our agency obtained Department of Defense approval to prepay the costs of emergency healthcare. Please advise if the civilian employees can utilize their Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) to cover these costs while on TDY.

A1: The GTCC cannot be used to prepay the costs of emergency healthcare. However, the DoD Component does have the flexibility to prepay the cost of emergency healthcare if the situation warrants it. Please reach out to your budget office as they will be able to advise you on how to properly apply DoD Component funds to prepay any medical needs. Furthermore, if the Department of Labor determines the illness is work-related, the employee may be eligible for workers' compensation benefits.

Q2: If a base (or office) closes due to COVID-19 and employees cannot report to the worksite, may an agency authorize Weather and Safety Leave?

A2: Yes, an agency could authorize Weather and Safety leave to non-telework program participants whose office or base is closed. Telework program participants would be expected to continue working and may not receive weather and safety leave.

Q3: What should DoD Components do to prepare to implement social distancing strategies which increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others?

A3: To mitigate community transmission and protect vulnerable populations, DoD Components may be advised to implement social distancing strategies. Such strategies include the use of telework, teleconferences, and flexible work schedules (e.g., schedules that provide for flexible work days and/or work hours). To prepare to implement such strategies, DoD Components should review their continuity of operation plans. In addition, DoD Components may want to encourage employees eligible to telework but who are not current telework program participants to participate. DoD Components may periodically exercise their telework capabilities to ensure that program participants have the information technology, infrastructure, and procedures needed to support simultaneous telework by multiple employees. In addition, DoD Components could determine how they will conduct operations with high absenteeism rates. For example, it may be appropriate to cross-train personnel on key functions.

Q4: What options are available for DoD civilian employees, whether in the United States or at an overseas location, if schools and child care facilities that their

children attend are closed but the employees are healthy and their workplaces are open?

A4: Employees in these circumstances are not eligible for weather and safety leave. DoD Components may authorize telework participants to telework when there are young children or other persons requiring care and supervision in the case of an emergency. Employees under these circumstances must still account for work and non-work hours during his or her tour of duty and take appropriate leave (paid or unpaid) to account for time spent away from normal work-related duties (e.g., to care for a child or dependent). Employees who are not telework program participants may use annual leave or other paid time off, such as accrued compensatory time or credit hours. If authorized by DoD Component policy, supervisors may authorize alternative work schedules (compressed or flexible work schedules) that provide for flexible work days and/or work hours.