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From FEMA, U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security

7 Essential Tips for Safe and Healthy Teleworking

With FEMA's commitment to developing a culture of mobile work and the agency's emphasis on telework, health and safety at home remains an important consideration.

The foremost health and safety concerns with a home office are ergonomic working conditions. Teleworkers should have desks and chairs that facilitate good posture and reduce repetitive muscle strain. Working from home has a few other challenges, including plentiful access to snacks and fewer distractions to break up tasks like reading and typing.

To combat these challenges and enhance health and safety while teleworking, consider these seven tips:

1. **Fidgeting is actually beneficial.** No offense, but Mom was wrong on this one. Mayo Clinic researchers in 2005 concluded the more you move – even tapping your feet under a desk – the less likely it is that you will gain weight. Small movements have major lifestyle impacts.
2. **Take frequent breaks.** Stand up and stretch to keep blood moving to all your limbs. One colleague at FEMA receives frequent reminders about conference calls. He takes those reminders as an opportunity to do push ups or squats beside his desk.
3. **Combat the pantry with healthy snacks.** At a certain time, we all feel hungry when working from home. Prepare healthy snacks of fruits and vegetables ahead of time and avoid the chips.
4. **Stand for your calls.** When participating on conference calls or taking phone calls, pace around the house. This is a tactic to stimulate the body and mind and is frequently suggested as a good practice when participating in a job interview by telephone.
5. **Trade your commute time for exercise.** When teleworking, use the time saved from commuting to exercise. Whether it's a brisk walk around the neighborhood, a run or going to the gym, a little exercise has physical and psychological benefits during the workday.
6. **Keep cords under control.** Computer cords and telephone chargers can become a tangled mess and cause trip hazards. Avoid this risk by ensuring there is no path between your work station and your outlet.
7. **Plan for mobile work.** Mobile work and telework requires that employees transport laptops daily between home and office. The extra weight may require you to consider back strengthening exercises or an ergonomic brief case design to ensure safe carrying.

Because of FEMA's mission, mobile work and telework will continue to be important -- especially as leases expire and more employees transition to a higher density workplace. Take the opportunity now to think about your telework environment and stay healthy and safe.