

Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters



*Affiliated with the
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America*



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Dear Sisters and Brothers (Financial Secretaries and Local Presidents),

Some locals have asked for assistance and suggestions during this unique time of Covid-19. We are here to support you in any way we can. As you know many of our staff are working remotely. Our council offices remain open, with limited staff, while our reps continue with jobsite visits for now. We believe we should be prepared to support a member, contractor, and fellow staff member with minimal interruption. We continue to improve and streamline that process daily.

We know the locals are dedicated to a value of continued service for our members. Your talented and seasoned administrative staff are capable of handling members' needs over the phone and via email. If you choose to setup remote work, there will be some transitions while connections are set up, learning how to dial into the local's main phone to retrieve messages, etc., but it's very doable, and it's a safe decision for local staff and for our members.

It is also important that you encourage administrative staff to be creative and suggest alternative ways to support your members, officers, and each other. Our staff are coming up with great workaround ideas and better ways of doing things; in fact, we may institute some of the new procedures permanently, when we are back in full force at the offices.

We have made the decision to follow state and the federal recommendations to continue to pay employees sick leave if they are sick, even if they have run out of sick leave. In this time of virus transmission, it is the safe, humane, and recommended choice.

Take a look at some lessons we've learned in the last few days to make your transition easier if you are choosing remote work options.

Preparing for a remote work scenario:

1. Determine how many staff you need to have in-office.
2. Can more than one admin staff work in-office while following social distancing as suggested by the CDC?
3. Inventory the types of equipment needed to get their job done remotely including office supplies.
4. Get employees ready ahead of time in case there is an immediate instruction to work at home.
5. Scan and digitize information needed to facilitate remote work.
6. Change work hours to coincide with daylight for security.
7. During work hours lock front doors, post signs including phone numbers for the local and the Council dispatch department.
8. Contact IT to set up a VPN connection only if necessary. *See more below on this.
9. Employee must have an Internet connection at home.

Remote work suggestions:

- *VPN (Virtual Private Network) if needed, should be set up on their desktop or laptop by your IT technician. This is a very simple software addition that allows you to securely connect an outside desktop or laptop with your local union's server. It reacts as though they are sitting at their desk.
- VPN is not necessary at all if employees do not work with a server in addition to their desktop or laptop.
- Label all cords before disconnecting (cord A goes into the HDMI plug on back of desktop).
- Take a couple of reams of paper home for printers if needed.
- Instead of printing something at home, save it as a pdf and place in an electronic folder.
- Work towards being paperless.
- Write up procedure/instructions to call into the office phone to retrieve messages.
- Or forward office calls to their cell number.
- Clarify that employees are to keep regular work hours, take two 15-minute breaks, their full lunch time, and that they are to be available for call during working hours.

Other factors to consider:

- ✓ Practice face to face structured check ins with employees daily to provide managerial support and communication, either in office or on video conferencing.
- ✓ Encourage staff to "dress and groom" for work, and to be ready for morning check-in's.
- ✓ Ask for a daily report so that you can be in tune to the workload, member needs, staffing needs.
- ✓ Some staff will experience loneliness after a while. Check in with employees daily, even just to chat about the weather or a silly story.
- ✓ Merge calls with others on the line for collaborative conversations.
- ✓ Use email, texting, chat, video conferencing. Check with your IT to set up free but secure video conferencing if desired.
- ✓ Split up work locations; some days from home, some days in the office.
- ✓ Prohibit working outside of their home or the office to maintain secure internet connections.
- ✓ Schedule virtual team lunches for fun.

As leaders we must continue the business of the local by having mail picked up, deliveries made, income received, payroll processed, and bills paid. Check signers must be ready to travel to sign checks, or checks can be left at the local with all the appropriate backup paperwork attached for signatures and mailing. The suggestions and recommendations I've shared will likely shift and change as we learn more.

History has shown that our members, industry, and staff are resilient. We will get through this, but we must take every precaution to remain safe and healthy. Social distancing must be observed.

Please stay in touch on social media and our COVID member resource site www.nwcarpenters.org/news/covid-19/ , stay connected, and remember: You are not alone.

In solidarity,



Evelyn Shapiro
Executive Secretary-Treasurer



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