



**Special points of interest to discuss
with your staff from this issue:**

- Flexible Workplace Options
- Benefits of Flexible Workplace
- Ideas for how Flexibility may be useful

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BROOKHAVEN
NATIONAL LABORATORY

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Leadership Connection

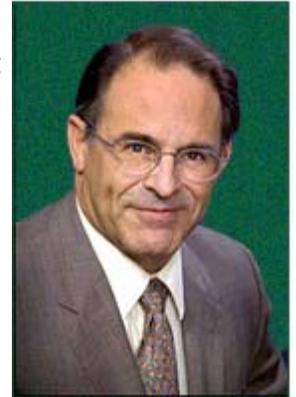
Director's Message

After much discussion and debate over the past six months, I'm pleased to announce that we are moving ahead and implementing several options for flexible work schedules. I asked HR to send out this special issue of the *Leadership Connection* because I want to emphasize that you, the Laboratory's supervisors, are the key to the success or failure in the implementation of these flexible work schedules. I am counting on you to help make this work for the benefit of our employees and the Laboratory.

There are diverse opinions about the pros and cons of flexible work schedules, and legitimate concerns about their impacts on supervisors and operations. But after thorough research, consideration, and planning, we've determined that the benefits to staff and the Laboratory far outweigh any negative aspects. Organizations that we surveyed and used as models for our program report benefits that include increased morale and job satisfaction, improved productivity, and reduced employee turnover and recruitment costs.

Flextime is a tool that we are adopting so we may remain competitive in our efforts to attract and retain talented employees. A flexible workplace is a broadly sought benefit. Flexible schedules can also be used to help staff accomplish work more efficiently while simultaneously addressing their personal needs. They can help employees manage a wide range of external responsibilities such as attending college, raising children, caring for elderly parents, volunteering in the community, or pursuing personal interests. And it can benefit our operations by capitalizing on work schedules that increase productivity, individual contributions, and expand coverage.

I believe that you get more energy and innovation out of people by enabling them to have a good balance between their work and family lives. And, as I said above, supervisors are the key to making this happen. That's why I'm encouraging all supervisors to experiment with our new program of non-traditional work schedules so we can find ways that your staff and job performance may benefit. We expect some growing pains, but I challenge supervisors to remain open-minded and to think strategically about our competitiveness as a national research institution today and in the future. I believe that sustaining a flexible workplace is crucial to our success.



Laboratory Director
Sam Aronson

Flexible Work Arrangements

Program Description

Starting on April 21st, BNL supervisors will be authorized to approve two forms of flexible work arrangements for their employees. These arrangements are called **FlexMonth** and **CoreHours**. A third option, **TeleWork**, will be available in a few months.

While supervisors have permitted flexibility in work schedules to employees in the past, BNL has had no formal policy that governs this. Flexible work arrangements serve as tools for recruitment, retention, and even productivity. Flexible work arrangements are generally considered an attractive feature of employment, so they will make BNL a more appealing place to work for prospective employees. A formal policy enables BNL to publicize this opportunity in our recruitment efforts. It also helps to ensure that the arrangements are managed effectively and consistently.

As a benefit of employment, they serve as a retention tool, but they also permit supervisors to establish work arrangements that may actually enable a valued employee faced with balancing personal demands on their time to continue working. Finally, while the personal benefit to employees is reasonably obvious, if constructed effectively, arrangements can enhance productivity. Examples include providing additional coverage for a service area, and enabling employees to focus work effort to periods of greatest demand.

The Management Council was recently briefed on the flexible arrangement program, and employees will soon be informed. This information is provided to supervisors to enable them to start thinking about the possibilities and how they will be handled.

Descriptions of the Three Arrangements

FlexMonth is a work arrangement that *full-time exempt employees* may request of their supervisors. If approved, employees record work and leave time against a monthly target equal to the budgeted hours on the monthly time entry screens in PeopleSoft HR. The primary purpose of the FlexMonth arrangement is to provide management and staff the flexibility to balance workload demands (e.g., project deadlines or peak workloads) with personal demands (e.g., doctor appointments, parent-teacher conferences, or other absences that may be unplanned.)

CoreHours is a work arrangement that *full-time exempt and non-bargaining non-exempt monthly and weekly employees* may request of their supervisors. Employees approved for this arrangement work five 8-hour days per week that include the standard core hours between 10:00 am to 3:00 pm each weekday. The balance of the 8-hour day is worked before and/or after those hours. Employee start times are typically set for each day of the week.

TeleWork is a work arrangement that when available, *full-time exempt employees* may request in which a portion of their work schedule is performed off-site, usually at their home. A TeleWork agreement documents the conditions and requirements of the arrangement.

Supervisors will be responsible for determining whether any of the arrangements are feasible, and, if so, establishing the conditions that address the employee's work requirements.

These descriptions are sure to generate many questions. We have tried to anticipate and answer some on pages 4 and 5. Additional opportunities to learn more will be provided in the coming weeks.

Flex-work programs will be announced Lab-wide
in the next Monday Memo on March 10.
Questions, comments? Please send to supervisornews@bnl.gov



Managing a Flexible Workplace

First a Café that serves Starbucks, and now a formal flex-work policy? Did I take a wrong turn somewhere and end up on the Google campus? My how things change. And as we all know, change is difficult, especially when you've been a supervisor here for 28 years. Managing flexible work arrangements is not going to make a supervisor's job any easier either—not at first. But long-term it will.

The workforce is changing and we need to change with it. We need to create work arrangements that help us to retain the valuable skills of existing employees and aid us in recruiting new ones. Life has changed too. And a flexible workplace can help all of us balance our responsibilities a little more easily. Not only can we improve how work is accomplished at Brookhaven, but we can help our staff to be more content at work and at home.

The details of how to implement flexible work arrangements in your work area falls to you, the supervisor. This will take a lot of communication to ensure that all employees are aware of coverage needs and expectations for assignments. Good relationships among everyone involved are important for a successful flex-work policy. Trust is a big factor; supervisors must feel confident that employees will not abuse the benefits and staff must feel that their requests have been adequately and equitably considered. Staff need to meet and exceed performance expectations consistently and maintain a solid performance record to reap benefits. Flex-work is a privilege, not a right, and, if abused, can be taken away at the discretion of the supervisor.

So although I may refrain from ever sipping gourmet coffee for the principle of the thing, there are some changes I can't fight because they make sense strategically for Brookhaven and our staff—even supervisors. Any good supervisor will benefit from, and appreciate having, productive and engaged workers, regardless of what schedule they work.

Potential Benefits to Consider

- Improves the quality of life and morale for employees, thereby enhancing employee performance and their individual contributions.
- Appeals to diverse staff for many reasons—flextime isn't just for childcare anymore.
- Reduces stress and distraction by giving employees more control/influence over work and personal schedules.
- Decreases distraction and interruption for tasks that require concentration by enabling completion during off-hours.
- Lowers absenteeism and turnover by providing flexibility for personal needs.
- Provides energy savings and reduces commuter traffic during peak travel times.
- Reduces a long commute by enabling it off-peak.
- Allows for morning/night person to concentrate on work during period when they are most productive.

Major Obstacles to FlexWork Success

- Lack of awareness – supervisors and staff must understand the power of doing it—both for the benefit of the organization and the employee.
- Inflexibility of the supervisor—supervisors rule out flex options across the board.
- Flex schedules that are not pre-planned, communicated, and agreed upon.
- Flex schedules that don't optimize employee performance.
- Supervisor allows abuse because of poor communications and inadequate performance management.
- Supervisors cope poorly with co-workers who don't qualify for flex-time.
- Supervisors don't allow schedules to evolve in response to employee's needs or changing situation.
- Staff assume the same opportunities apply to all regardless of work needs and performance level.

Q&A for Supervisors

It sounds like employees approved for FlexMonth can work at any time of the day or week. Is that correct?

Under FlexMonth, an employee must achieve the target hours through work and eligible leave, so it may seem that way. They are still, however, expected to maximize the time they work with the schedule of their work group (typically Monday to Friday). Also, weekend work should be limited to addressing work demands that could not be met during the normal workweek. Finally, organizations and supervisors may place additional requirements on the work hours of employees on FlexMonth, so that the productivity of the work group is maintained. One prudent requirement would be for the employee to notify their supervisor about when they will be at work.

Can employees work extra hours early in the month so that they may take days off at the end of the month? FlexMonth is not intended for this purpose. Vacation should serve as the vehicle to provide whole days off. In addition, once the monthly target is achieved, the employee still remains responsible for addressing the requirements of their position, and this could often involve working hours well beyond the monthly target. The primary objective of the arrangement is the flexibility it provides. Also, as noted in the previous question, departments may impose restrictions on FlexMonth that prevent accumulating extra days off.

It appears that CoreHours is the only flexible arrangement available to non-bargaining non-exempt monthly and weekly employees. Why is that?

Because wage and hour laws dictate overtime pay requirements and payment for all hours worked for non-exempt employees, BNL must consider this when establishing work schedules. The primary concern is the risk of excessive salary cost. FlexMonth could result in unnecessary overtime costs, because it enables employees to determine when they work more than 40 hours in a week. Because the ability to monitor and verify work hours is very limited, TeleWork could result in unauthorized hours worked for which the Laboratory would be bound to compensate non-exempt employees. The CoreHours arrangement was designed to address these concerns. It is typical that

work arrangements for non-exempt employees are subject to more limitations than exempt employees.

How will supervisors know if their management supports this initiative?

Organization heads are asked to communicate their expectations and restrictions, if any, on flexible work arrangements to their supervisors, so they may plan accordingly. It would be wise to ask about this if no expectations are communicated.

May I, as a supervisor, establish additional restrictions on the standard flexible work arrangements to ensure that work requirements are addressed?

Yes. Involving the employee can help the employee understand the specific requirements that you are concerned about. Regardless, restrictions should be clearly communicated to the employee and documented.

What if I don't want to permit any employees to work under any of the arrangements?

It is possible that the nature of the work of the group is such that it will suffer more than any benefit the arrangements will justify. Supervisors are asked to remain open to considering all aspects of the arrangements. The bottom line is that it is primarily the supervisor's decision. Employees may, however, appeal a denial of their request up to the department chair or division manager level. If that occurs, it will be worthwhile to have considered all the factors involved.

What documentation will be required for an arrangement?

Every employee who is working one of the three flexible arrangements must have that arrangement, and its approval, documented. A FlexMonth and CoreHours arrangement can be documented either on the form that will be provided in SBMS or another document that contains the same information. For TeleWork, the form in SBMS must be used. In either case, the approved arrangement is signed by both the supervisor and the employee. In addition, for TeleWork, approved employee property passes will be necessary for transporting any government property off the Laboratory site. Consult with Property Representatives for details on this. Finally, leave and work time must be reported consistent with the arrangement and timekeeping procedures.

Q&A for Supervisors

Are there any special timekeeping procedures associated with the flexible work arrangements?

Each month, employees must check the box labeled Alternate Schedule in the bottom right corner of the electronic timecard. Then, employees working FlexMonth must record their work and leave time every day that they work as they complete each workday. This is actually recommended for all employees, however employees who may work a different number of hours each day need to keep closer track of their time. Also, weekly-paid, nonexempt employees who work a CoreHours arrangement must note this on their time cards to ensure that the arrangement does not trigger shift pay for hours outside of the normal work schedule. Work performed at home under a TeleWork arrangement is recorded as if it was performed on site.

Are there any differences in leave accruals or charges for those on flexible arrangements?

No, vacation and sick leave accrue according to the same criteria as employees on a standard work schedule, however employees on FlexMonth must remember that, while they may work more than eight hours in a day, they may charge no more than eight hours per day to sick or vacation.

One other condition of FlexMonth is that employees are expected to meet their monthly target even when they may have doctors and dentist visits in a particular month. The flexibility afforded in this arrangement is expected to permit them to make these visits outside of work hours.

Employees on FlexMonth are not expected to work on holidays, but if their work demands require this, the time worked will be credited to vacation.

When can I start to consider flexible work arrangements for my staff?

Within the next few weeks, employees will be notified about the new arrangements through a number of communications sources within BNL. By the end of March, we plan to publish a new Flexible Work Arrangement subject area in SBMS that provides both procedures and forms. With this, the agreements can be documented and you can schedule arrangements to start

effective April 21. FlexMonth must start at the beginning of a monthly electronic timecard reporting period. A CoreHours schedule may start at any time, except for weekly non-exempt employees, who can start at the beginning of any workweek.

Which exempt employees may be approved for TeleWork when available?

Only office-like activities may be performed under a TeleWork arrangement. Activities that require limited interaction with others are most adaptable to TeleWork. On the other hand, employees who require regular on-the-job training, close supervision, or regular interaction with co-workers, are not suitable for TeleWork.

How can I ensure the proper level of safety for employees under a TeleWork arrangement?

Even though only office-like work will be permitted, this is an important consideration. Employees will be responsible for maintaining a safe and secure work area. The SBMS subject area on Flexible Work Arrangements will provide the requirements and guidance on this.

Are there restrictions to the use of computing equipment and type of information that may be transported off-site for TeleWork?

This is another important consideration. These restrictions are well defined in SBMS in the Interim Procedures for Personally Identifiable Information, and the Operations Security Subject Area. In addition, the use of computing equipment should comply with the Cyber Security, Unclassified Subject Area and its associated internal links.

What property or supplies may be provided for employees who TeleWork?

The primary rules are that (1) costs shall be kept at a minimum level, and (2) any property or supplies that are provided to employees must be for performing job responsibilities. In addition, transport of Laboratory property offsite must conform with SOP 340.8, Off-Site Use of Government Property, including documentation in the form of a property pass.

Still need answers?

Send your comments and questions to supervisornews@bnl.gov or contact Bob Kelly on ext. 3782.