

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
POLICY ON WORK SCHEDULE NOTIFICATION, COMMUNICATION, AND
COLLABORATION

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to reinforce the importance of work schedule notification, communication, and collaboration between employees and between employees and supervisors at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). As the USPTO workforce increasingly disperses from the Alexandria headquarters through telework and the opening of satellite offices, the need for work schedule notification, communication, and collaboration correspondingly grows. This policy seeks to promote a consistent, Agency-wide, approach to these challenges.

II. Scope

The provisions of this policy apply to all USPTO supervisors and full-time teleworkers.

III. Definitions

Collaboration tools are the electronic communication tools that enable employees to effectively communicate with each other and their supervisors, to collaborate on joint projects, and to participate in Agency events, training, and meetings, regardless of physical location. The USPTO's collaboration tools are currently comprised of the Lync enterprise unified communications platform.

Full-time teleworkers are those employees working either a part-time or full-time schedule and participating in the Patents Hoteling Program (PHP), Patents Hoteling Program for NTEU 243 (PHP-N), Trademark Work at Home Hoteling Programs (TWAH), the SPE/MQAS Full-Time Telework Program, their successors, or a functionally similar program under which the employee generally does not retain USPTO office space and typically works his or her entire schedule from a remote location, save for periodic reporting back to a USPTO worksite (if applicable.)

Presence indicator refers to the functionality of Lync, or a successor tool, that allows a user to electronically determine whether another user is available to communicate.

IV. PTONET and Collaboration Tools

All full-time teleworkers must remain logged into PTONET during their working hours when PTONET is available to the teleworker. PTONET will be considered to be unavailable to the teleworker during any period of outage and/or when the teleworker's duties make PTONET inaccessible (e.g., attending training or meetings or traveling for official business).

All full-time teleworkers (when working remotely) and supervisors (regardless of work location) will be signed into the electronic communication tools provided (currently Lync) when

these tools are properly functioning and available. Full-time teleworkers and their supervisors will use the collaboration tools, including the presence indicator, to effectively communicate, participate in any USPTO events, training or appropriate business meetings. The presence indicator is used to determine when an employee is present to facilitate communications. It is understood that the presence indicator does not necessarily reflect whether or not an employee is working. Participants may use any presence indicator status, except that participants should not take action to block available communication methods (i.e., by setting a "do not disturb" status in Lync).

V. Work Schedule Notification

All supervisors and full-time teleworkers will provide advance notice of the number of hours that they intend to work.

This notice must:

- be submitted either on a daily, weekly, or biweekly basis. If an employee's intended biweekly work schedule is relatively consistent, the employee may choose to submit a single biweek's notice and indicate that it will remain effective until/unless changed.
- be submitted in advance of the week or biweek which it covers, and should be submitted by email. If an employee is submitting a daily notice, then advanced notice should be submitted when the employee begins work that day or by noon, whichever is earlier.
- specify, for each day covered by the notice, the total number of hours (including overtime, compensatory time, credit hours, etc.) that the employee intends to work on each day (or, that the employee does not intend to work at all on a particular day).
- for full-time employees, account for at least 80 hours of intended work. If the employee's intended schedule amounts to more than 80 hours of work, then the surplus should correlate with authorized overtime, compensatory time, credit hours, etc. If the employee's intended schedule amounts to less than 80 hours of work, then the employee should indicate his intention to take leave to cover the difference. All employees are reminded of their obligation to be in a pay status (i.e., working or on approved leave) for the entirety of their work schedule.

All currently available work schedules and work schedule flexibilities remain in effect and are not restricted by this policy. It is understood that the number of hours an employee actually works may vary from the original noticed schedule provided by the employee.

Reported schedules should be consistent with the employee or supervisor's existing work schedule requirements. For example, for all full time employees and supervisors on IFP/IFS, the current work schedule requirements remain in effect, including:

1. Employees/supervisors must work a minimum of 4 days per week (Monday through Saturday between 5:30am to 10:00 pm), including core hours.

2. Employees/supervisors may not work more than 12 hours or less than 15 minutes on a work day.
3. Employees/supervisors must satisfy their requirement for 80 regular hours during a hi-week.
4. Employees and supervisors must notify each other if they will be absent on a weekday that is a scheduled work day for that employee.
5. Regular hours may not be worked on Sunday. However, credit, compensatory, or overtime hours may be worked, consistent with policies and agreements.

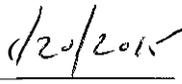
VI. Effective Date

This policy will take effect on February 22, 2015.

FOR THE



Frederic W. Steckler
Chief Administrative Officer



DATE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Regarding Work Schedule Notification,
Communication and Collaboration Policy

1. Does this policy change my ability to work a flexible schedule such as Increased Flexitime Program (IFP)?

No.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all full-time teleworkers and all USPTO supervisors. See Sections II and III of the Policy.

3. What does this policy do?

Full time teleworkers and all supervisors must now do the following:

1. Remain logged into the PTONET during their working hours;
 - n. Remain signed into the electronic collaboration tools (currently Lync) during their working hours; and
 - m. Provide notice of intended work schedules.
4. **If I am logged into PTONET and my Lync presence indicator has automatically turned to some status other than available (e.g., yellow, indicating I am "away"), what do I need to do?**

Nothing. **I**t is expected you are doing your work as you normally do. The presence indicator must be turned on when you are working and when it is functioning and available; however, the status of the presence indicator may be set to any status without authorization, other than "do not disturb."

5. Is there any time I can use "Do Not Disturb" on my presence indicator?

Your supervisor can grant permission to use the "Do Not Disturb" setting on your presence indicator for periods of time, as appropriate.

6. **If I am logged into PTONET and then get disconnected from the network, what do I need to do?**

When you become aware of the disconnection, you should take steps to reconnect yourself to the network. If you are unable to re-connect, you should call the OCIO Service Desk to see if they can help you re-connect. **If** that does not resolve the problem, contact your supervisor.

7. Do IFP/IFS Policies remain in effect?

Yes, you can view the IFP policy in Appendix A:

http://ptoweb.uspto.gov/ptointranet/ohr/policies_and_procedures/policies/work_schedule_appendix.pdf

NTEU 243 IFS Policy (USPTO and NTEU 243 Collective Bargaining Agreement Effective 12/06/2013 -SECTION 7: Increased Flexitime Schedule (IFS)) [Article 31, Work Schedules, Section 7A-0](#)