

Flu Pandemic Spurs More Reliance on Telework in Business Continuity Testing



Government agencies rely on teleworking employees for business continuity when daily operations are interrupted, from inclement weather to pandemic flu outbreak.

Federal professionals focused on ensuring business continuity, or Continuity of Operations (COOP), have long prepared for the possibility of a pandemic flu, but last year's outbreak of the H1N1 virus brought an even greater sense of urgency to planned exercises. Several agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, updated or changed their testing parameters to incorporate the reality of H1N1, along with worst-case scenarios that included widespread employee absenteeism, severe demands on remote access systems and bandwidth, and more reliance on telework.

Among these were the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), which this past fall tested its capability and capacity to telework during a pandemic, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which

developed a tabletop exercise that tested how well the agency could hold up if the H1N1 outbreak mirrored the extreme health and societal effects of the 1918 Spanish flu.

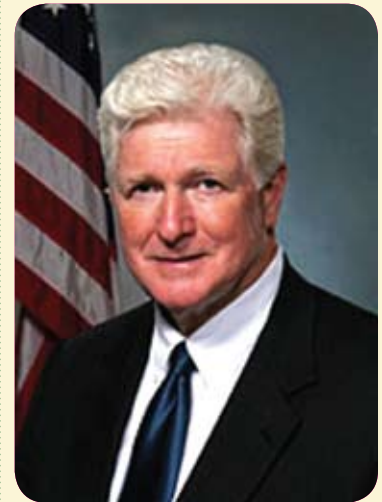
The Teleworker interviewed COOP planners and telework officials at DISA and FDIC to discover how these exercises went, what they learned, and what contingencies and lessons will be incorporated into their future business continuity plans.

DISA: Stressing Telework

For the first time, in September 2009, DISA held a COOP exercise that focused on testing telework and its ability to enable social distancing without negatively affecting the agency's ability to meet mission requirements.

Planners wanted to maximize the number of employees who were able to telework by ensuring

From the Hill: An Interview with Jim Moran



U.S. Representative Jim Moran (D-VA), currently serving his 10th term and a member of the House Appropriations Committee, is a co-sponsor of the *Telework Improvements Act of 2009*. Rep. Moran recently spoke with *The Teleworker* about the state of telework in the Federal government and what needs to be done to increase adoption.

Q: Have you become familiar with a specific telework program or Federal agency telecommuting initiative that you consider particularly useful in serving as a model to encourage broader telework adoption across the Federal workforce? If so, what makes this case or program significant in your view?

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that all eligible employees telework at least once during the exercise; increase employee awareness of pandemic influenza; and stress test the agency's Virtual Private Network (VPN) capacity to see how the mission would be impacted during a crisis. The exercise also was intended to determine how many employees actually had access to the necessary equipment to enable work from a remote location.

Aaron Glover, Telework Program Manager at DISA, notes that the emergence of the highly contagious H1N1 virus in the spring of 2009 caused continuity planners at DISA to rethink how they would manage a traditional COOP event. With a flu pandemic, he explains, "you would not relocate possibly sick personnel from an infected area into a relocation site or a non-infected area. For this reason, agencies must rely on teleworking employees to sustain the mission."

The exercise proved a success, as nearly 3,400 civilian and military employees, all furnished with agency-owned laptops, worked from home during the designated test dates (contractors did not participate), while 7,000 members of the workforce (including contractors) received H1N1 training.

Jeffrey Mains, DISA COOP Team Lead, notes that the exercise resulted in several key findings:

- Preplanning was critical to success and helped reduce the learning curve for first-time teleworkers
- There remains a need to further stress VPN capacity and Internet Access Point architecture
- A plan of action must be developed to identify and correct any shortage of laptops DISA-wide

- Contractor work performance agreements now are being reviewed to include required service and performance levels for support during a crisis situation

Glover says the test ultimately proved to managers that telework is a key tool in the agency's ability to meet mission requirements while also providing the social distancing required during a flu outbreak. "Telework will continue to be a critical part of the agency COOP plan," he states.

DISA is planning to hold its next pandemic influenza COOP exercise in the spring of 2010.

FDIC: Looking Back and Looking Forward

The FDIC already had planned to conduct a series of regional disaster preparedness exercises that featured a pandemic flu scenario. However, when the H1N1 virus emerged in 2009, emergency planners, including the FDIC Health and Safety Officer, quickly changed gears, incorporating a much harsher reality that mimicked the type of nationwide outbreak that public health officials fear most: the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic, which ultimately sickened an estimated 25 million Americans and killed more than 500,000.

The FDIC exercise scenario was designed to test how the agency would respond if it experienced a 40 percent employee absenteeism rate across all of its regional offices, a strong mandate for social distancing, and a major strain on national resources, including Internet bandwidth.

"We recognized that in such a situation, telework would have to play very heavily," says Tommie Barnes, Assistant Director for Security and Emergency Preparedness at FDIC. "Telework would be critical to addressing those types of shortfalls

in our workforce and ensuring continued productivity."

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

From the Hill: An Interview with Jim Moran

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A: I have been impressed with former Governor Tim Kaine's innovative Telework!VA initiative. Administered by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the program provides telework support to private businesses and nonprofits in the Commonwealth.

Telework!VA is a prime example of the capacity of government to spur innovation and change in the economy. I believe such programs are critical to addressing legitimate technical and managerial concerns about the viability of telework in public and private enterprises. Telework programs cannot succeed without laying the proper groundwork – this goes beyond establishing secure intranets or broadband connections. Virginia's focus on training managers and teleworkers is a particularly important component in the larger effort.

To read the full interview, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

The Teleworker Highlights

To read the full articles in *The Teleworker*, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

CDC-INFO Remains On Call During H1N1 Outbreak

When the H1N1 virus emerged last spring, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC-INFO National Contact Center found itself squarely on the front lines. Between April and December 2009, CDC-INFO

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CDC-INFO Remains On Call During H1N1 Outbreak

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representatives answered more than 198,000 inquiries from state and local public health agencies, health care providers, and the general public about everything from treatment protocols to vaccine availability.

“We are considered a critical service, especially during a pandemic,” says Paige Flynn, Operations Lead for CDC-INFO. “No matter what the scenario, we have to stay up and running 24/7.”

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

Organizations Not Ready to Support the Growing Mobile Workforce

Having a plan does not necessarily translate into getting results. A recent study, conducted by Telework Exchange and Intel, revealed that while 81 percent of government and industry IT decision makers have written business continuity plans, both sectors have been hampered by difficult implementation issues. Further, the majority indicate they do not believe their current employees are able to work remotely in the event of an emergency.

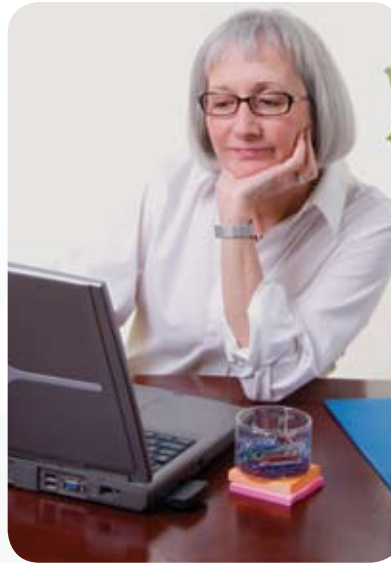
The study, “Mobilizing Against Pandemic,” depicted a grim prognosis for business continuity planning.

To view the full report visit, www.teleworkexchange.com/mobilizingagainstpandemic.

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

Washington State Study: Telework Needs Support to Continue Momentum

Telework is an inevitable, growing movement in Washington State,



according to a recently released report to the Washington State legislature that detailed the findings of the 15-month-long Kitsap Telework Pilot Project. However, the economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits are potentially so significant to employers and employees alike – as well as to the state’s goals for improved air quality and reductions in traffic congestion – that legislators and Washington State agencies need to accelerate adoption by providing more outreach and funding.

To view the full report, visit: www.teleworktoolkit.com/library/Telework_Project_Report.pdf.

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

GreenGov Challenge: A Federal Government Greening Initiative

The Obama administration is committed to Federal sustainability. On October 5, 2009, the President signed an Executive Order that set sustainability goals for Federal agencies and committed the Federal government to lead by example. As part of its bottom-up approach, the administration hosted the GreenGov

Challenge, a month-long participatory Web page that encouraged Federal employees to weigh in with opinions and solutions.

For more information on the GreenGov Challenge, visit www.whitehouse.gov/GreenGov.

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

USPTO Goes Public with Telework Report

In 2008, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) published a 28-page internal report highlighting its telework successes and best practices in overcoming various cultural and technical challenges. The report has been so well received and in demand throughout the government, USPTO officials recently decided to post it on the agency’s public Web site.

To view the full report, visit www.teleworkexchange.com/pdfs/uspto_2008_telework_annual_report.pdf.

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

Hey Boss, I Think I’d Like to Telework... Ok?

By Kathy Kadilak

Wouldn’t it be great if you could walk up to your supervisor and ask to telework without worry and with a minimum of negotiation? In some organizations that may be possible, but generally speaking, there still is a need to present and justify your telework request carefully.

One of the most important features of any request is a definitive statement about your willingness to be flexible. By offering a plan for regular communication with your supervisor and co-workers, tracking of your assignments, and willingness

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to change your telework schedule to accommodate "on campus" meetings, you offer your supervisor assurance of your commitment and professionalism, which hopefully translates into his or her support of your request.

To read the full article, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.



Telework Exchange Highlights

Telework Exchange Calculators

You may know that teleworking saves commuting costs and is good for the environment, but do you know exactly how much money you can save or how much smaller your carbon footprint could be? To help you find out, Telework Exchange offers the Telework Value calculators (www.teleworkexchange.com/calcs-non-fed.asp), which will compute the potential cost and pollutant savings for individual teleworkers.

Telework Eligibility Gizmo

You, along with 79 percent of the workforce, want to telework. Do you know if you and your position are compatible with regular teleworking? Find out using the Telework Exchange Online Eligibility Gizmo www.teleworkexchange.com/gizmo.

Webcast: Business Continuity Planning – Prepare, Test, Connect

Agencies have the opportunity to prepare for emergency situations by empowering their workforce to operate remotely when necessary. What's needed? Telework training, testing, and technology. On February 25, Telework Exchange and Juniper Networks hosted a Webcast focused on this important topic titled, "Business Continuity Planning – Prepare, Test, Connect".

For more details, access to the Webcast is available at www.teleworkexchange.com/businesscontinuity.

OPM Offers Employees a Forum for Ideas to Improve Telework

In an effort to boost Federal telework participation, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in partnership with the General Services Administration and the White House Workgroup on Telework, in January sponsored a two-week-long, structured blog discussion that challenged all Federal employees to offer ideas on enhancing telework.

To view the blog, visit www.telework.gov/Blog/TeleworkTalk.

The Great Commuter Stress Out

Telework Exchange and HP invited Washington, D.C.-area commuters to beat the heck out of their commutes at "The Great Commuter Stress Out" event on November 10, 2009. The event allowed commuters to de-stress by taking whacks at car-shaped piñatas, getting stress-relieving neck massages, and enjoying refreshments, as well as learning more about the benefits of telework. See for yourself – event photos are posted at www.teleworkexchange.com/greatcommuterstressout.asp.



Spring 2010 Telework Exchange Town Hall Meeting

Thursday, April 8, 2010
Washington, D.C.

Morning Keynote Announced



Kareem Dale
Special Assistant to the
President for Disability Policy,
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