

Coronavirus Update: Guidelines for Workplace Flexibility and Time-Off Due to COVID-19

Mar 16, 2020



As the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency evolves, FirstEnergy understands that lengthy school closures and other public actions are impacting employees and their families. We are committed to helping employees meet family needs, while balancing the important role we play in serving our customers. This is a time to promote flexibility where possible as we navigate this situation together.

This article explains:

- Employees who are able to work from home should work from home, where possible.
- Enhanced flexible work guidelines to provide additional options for employees, including those who cannot work from home.
- New CV19 time code to accommodate situations where all possible flexible work options have been exhausted and employees have a qualifying need.
- Business travel is strongly discouraged and requires approval.
- New [coronavirus SharePoint page](#) is available where employees can find all COVID-19-related information and communications.

Beginning Tuesday, March 17, employees should work from home where possible. We recognize that not all employees can work from home. To this end, enhanced Guidelines on Workplace Flexibility and Time-Off Due to COVID-19 have been developed, which include practices for workplace flexibility as well as time-off due to COVID-19. To help employees meet some of the immediate challenges in front of us, leaders are encouraged to support

Business Travel Update

One of the most recommended ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is by social distancing, avoiding crowds and deliberately staying at least six feet away from another person. For this reason, all business travel is strongly discouraged. Any business travel deemed essential by the work group requires approval by that group's Executive Council member. Regular and ongoing essential business travel (such as travel done to access a work/project location) would only need approval by the Executive Council member once, unless circumstances change.

enhanced flexibility during this time, talk with employees to understand their specific situations, and think creatively about how we might be able to accommodate their needs.

Following is a summary of the guidelines:

Workplace flexibility

Our **typical flexible work arrangements** alone may not meet all flexibility needs of employees and their families during this time. As such, we have enhanced our workplace flexibility to include the following:

- Working from home when possible, including the following work-from-home situations due to COVID-19:
 - Caring for your children due to day care or school closings
 - Providing care for an elderly relative due to the lock down/closing of a nursing home or similar facility
 - Caring for a household member that is ill with COVID-19 or if you are quarantined due to COVID-19 and able to work
- Working more flexible hours than typical from your work location or at home in order to support your family needs due to COVID-19, including earlier start time, later stop time, different shift or working non-traditional hours;
- Restructuring roles or work sharing among groups where possible to permit working from home;
- Considering alternative solutions for work coverage: training additional back-ups for required in-person jobs, moving employees to their former roles during peak times or to provide information/insight that might help fill potential gaps;
- For bargaining unit employees, working with union leadership to provide flexible opportunities within current labor agreements or, to the extent necessary, to identify new opportunities for represented employees.

Time-off due to COVID-19

We recognize there are many essential jobs in the organization that can't be done flexibly. In situations where all possible flexible work options have been exhausted and employees have a qualifying need, we are creating a new time code, CV19, to provide regular, straight time pay as described below:

- Regular bargaining* and non-bargaining employees who are unable to perform their job from home *and* have a qualifying reason may take Paid Time-Off (with supervisor approval) using a new time code, CV19, to receive regular, straight time pay.

Employee Benefits and COVID-19

FirstEnergy's employee benefits, part of our Total Rewards Program, include resources to address the COVID-19 situation.

Life Resources EAP

The **Life Resources Employee Assistance Program** (EAP) is a free service available to employees and their household members. Contact the EAP at 888-745-0714 or visit the Life Resources EAP website for articles and information.

COVID-19 Testing

The FirstEnergy Anthem health plan has been updated to cover testing for COVID-19. The testing is being treated as a preventive care service and will be covered in full, with all member out-of-pocket costs waived. This benefit is available for employees and their family members who are covered on a FirstEnergy health plan.

Short-Term Disability Pay

If an employee is determined to be sick due to COVID-19, they can immediately begin using short-term disability pay. The typical seven-day period of first using Paid Time Off (called the elimination period) will be waived. Sedgwick administers FirstEnergy's Short-Term Disability Program and may be contacted at 844-409-7412 or www.mysedgwick.com to initiate a claim.

- Use of the time code CV19 should be a last resort after all flexibility and job modification alternatives have been exhausted. FirstEnergy does not want employees to be financially harmed by losing pay in a situation that is unavoidable and outside of the employee's control.
- Qualifying reasons to use CV19 include, but are not limited to:
 - Caring for your children due to day care or school closings when your spouse, domestic partner, or other responsible party is unable to provide the necessary family care;
 - Providing care for an elderly relative due to the lock down/closing of a nursing home or similar facility;
 - Quarantine situations as approved by corporate health and safety or mandated by a public health official/organization.

Qualifying reasons need to be validated and approved by your supervisor before this time can be taken. Where possible, employees should alternate family care needs due to COVID-19 with another family member or other responsible party in order to perform job responsibilities. CV19 should not be used if an employee becomes ill for any reason – as this would follow the normal sick time/short-term disability policies. Non-exempt employees continue to be required to receive advance approval from their supervisor before working any overtime.

Guidelines Available on new site for COVID-19 related info and documents

A new [coronavirus page](#) is available where employees can find all COVID-19-related information and communications. The complete [Guidelines on Workplace Flexibility and Time-Off Due to COVID-19 document](#) and a [COVID-19 time scenarios document](#), which can provide clarity on how to code specific time-off situations and the application of the new CV19 time code, are located on the site. Please check the site daily as it will continue to be updated as new information is available. For employees without access to SharePoint, a new page is being developed in the My First Rewards site. Details for accessing this page will be shared as soon as possible.

Technology and workplace flexibility

Employees who currently have laptops already have the capability to work from home without any issues. IT is working on options for employees with desktops. However, some employees use software that can only run on desktops, which means their job cannot be done away from their office.

There are no issues with employees accessing Microsoft Office apps, email, etc. from personal devices. All FE Cyber Security and Information Management policies will apply to home use of FirstEnergy systems, network and information.

** For bargaining unit employees, the company will work with union representatives on these changes.*