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Its Telework Week!

For more than 60,000 workers in America, March 5-9 will be the week that the “modern workplace” is at home. This week is the second annual effort of Telework Exchange to encourage workers and employers to save time and resources through telework. [Telework Exchange](#) describes itself as “a public-private partnership focused on demonstrating the tangible value of telework...” and describes Telework Week as a “win-win opportunity for agencies, organizations, employees, and the environment.”

By the end of last week, 62,322 employees had pledged on Telework’s website that they would work remotely for at least part of the next five days. That’s a big increase from the 40,000 who participated last year. Estimates say that this year’s teleworkers will save \$4.7 million in commuting costs and prevent 3,000 tons of pollutants from entering the atmosphere.

There’s no doubt that telework is becoming more acceptable. For some employers, allowing telework is a recruiting tool. Still there is a debate about teleworkers’ productivity, as discussed in a [previous post](#). One recent study concluded that those who work from home actually worked for only one hour each workday; other say that teleworkers are more productive than those who come to the office.

Employers who allow or encourage working remotely must do so with care. Timekeeping and reporting expectations need to be clear and consistent. Worker safety is a consideration, and should be the subject of [written agreements or written policies, or both](#). The security of company documents and information, which we’ve posted about several times ([9/7/11](#), and [2/11/12](#)) is a significant concern that only gets harder to address when workers are remote and using their own electronic equipment.

Here’s hoping that Telework Week will provide employers more data and discussion about this important topic.