

## TELEWORK

# Staying operational during a pandemic

## Senior executives should ensure around-the-clock work-anywhere capability for essential employees

BY SCOTT KRIENS

According to the World Health Organization, worldwide avian flu outbreaks are more widespread and severe than ever. Should the widely predicted pandemic materialize, the organization expects that many offices would empty out as the absentee rate skyrockets. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that as much as 40 percent of the entire workforce would be unable to have a physical work presence — maybe

for weeks on end. The country could see overcrowded hospitals, quarantined communities, millions of lives at risk and a crippled economy. The potential ripple effects are so dire, they're almost unimaginable.

Being prepared means providing essential employees with the ability to communicate and execute their responsibilities around the clock from anywhere they happen to be. The cornerstone of this continuity-of-operations (COOP) capability is a technically robust and cost-effective telework system that delivers instantaneous, highly secure access to all remote users — wherever and whenever they need it to do their jobs.

Commercial products already exist to support secure telework: Secure Sockets Layer virtual private networks provide transient connections to information technology assets so that employees can securely access agency resources from nearly anywhere using a variety of devices.

As agencies build their COOP blueprints in preparation for a potential pan-

dem, the federal government should consider the following recommendations.

### Deploy a secure, integrated and intelligent infrastructure.

Achieving the secure connectivity and control necessary to maintain government operations in a crisis involves a much more technically demanding set of requirements than simply surfing the Internet. Agencies would need an integrated and intelligent infrastructure that provides for the ready transmission of data. The telework infrastructure is most likely the same one we use every day. However, for more challenging scenarios, agencies may need an emergency communications system that relies on satellite communications.

### Focus on critical employees first.

The best place to launch an effective tele-

work implementation for COOP is with the country's leaders and senior, critical executives. They are the people who must be able to plan, organize and execute their agencies' responses at a moment's notice. They must be able to set the agenda for how their agencies apportion work to all of their remote employees to maintain operations as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### Maintain the integrity of the network by authenticating and authorizing end users.

Effective remote work plans have two significant components: the business rules that determine who has access to what information and under what conditions, and the technical environment that supports the business rules.

### Allow use of best-in-class technologies through open standards.

In an emergency such as a pandemic, communications will come from many disparate sources. As a result, technologies that govern information access and authentication must be able to recognize and interoperate with a broad spectrum of these sources. ■

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## DOWNLOAD

Find a link to the Office of Personnel Management's telework guidance on FCW.com Download's Data Call at [www.fcw.com/download](http://www.fcw.com/download).