

Frequently Asked Questions

A Guide for SoCalGas Leaders

1. What is the expectation for employees under a blended work model? Is there a policy I can reference?

SoCalGas blended employees must be in the office three days per week beginning January 8, 2024. The current policy requires a minimum of two days per week. The official [policy](#) is posted on the Workspace Evolution Gaslines site.

2. How long each day are employees expected to be in the office?

Generally, employees should be in the office for core business hours, as defined by their supervisor. Some employees may wish to flex their hours earlier or later based on their commute, which supervisors can accommodate and approve provided the employee is available for team collaboration and connection. Expectations should be shared as part of a [Team Norms](#) conversation.

3. Who decides when employees need to be in the office?

Leaders will create an in-office schedule for their team that maximizes collaboration and connection. Wherever possible, the schedule should include three uniform days each week. Leaders are encouraged to hold Team Norms meetings so that all expectations are clearly communicated.

4. Do the days on site need to be the same each week?

Teams should have a regular schedule of in-office days to maximize collaboration and connection. By leveraging this approach, virtual and hybrid team meetings can be reduced. There may be times when employees' in-office schedules need to shift for business or other reasons, but they are still expected to be onsite at least 3 days per week.

5. Can employees have their "in office day" at other locations (beyond their assigned location)?

Yes, if they have a business reason for being at that location. In-person meetings, site visits, and trainings are all potential reasons for reporting to a different location on a given day. However, employees cannot report to another location simply for convenience, as the purpose for the blended work model is to collaborate and connect. Additionally, employees may not change their mail-stop or assigned location without manager consent and a business reason for doing so.

6. How do I encourage collaboration if I only have one direct report?

Regardless of role or team size, every employee is part of a larger department or organization. Encourage them to collaborate with the next level up, with peers in similar functions across the department or organization, or cross-functionally. Additionally, consider enhancing coordination with other teams and creating an in-office schedule that maximizes collaboration with other groups.

7. Can exceptions be provided for employees with long commutes?

No, all blended employees are subject to the same three day minimum. However, all employees have access to a [\\$100 public transportation stipend](#), which can be especially helpful for those with long commutes.

8. How should I respond to an employee who has safety or health concerns with the in-office requirement?

If an employee has a health-related need, they should contact [Employee Care Services](#). Through an interactive process with input from the employee's health provider, the ECS team will assess and facilitate reasonable accommodations.

If an employee expresses concern related to the physical safety or security of the work environment, please immediately escalate the concern to [Corporate Security](#).

9. What flexibility can leaders offer within the blended model?

Leaders are expected to hold their teams accountable to the three-day minimum but can provide some flexibility based on business needs or for occasional personal needs.

10. Can employees work from home on their in-office days if they aren't feeling well?

Employees are encouraged to use their sick time when they are unwell, and remote work should not be used as a substitute for taking needed sick days. If an employee is recovering from illness but could be contagious, or if the employee suspects they may be getting sick, supervisors should use their best judgment regarding whether to provide flexibility with working from home (versus recommending their employee take a sick day). As always, the safety and well-being of employees is of paramount importance.

11. What are some best practices for in-office days?

Generally, employees should try to schedule in-person meetings when they are in the office, and reserve focused and "heads-down" work for remote days. Leaders can assist by thoughtfully planning staff meetings, 1x1s, and other regular cadences of meetings to correspond with in-office time. Microsoft Teams meetings should be minimized as much as possible on in-office days.

In-office days are great for networking and connection opportunities. Encourage employees to hold 1x1 meetings in-person, plan in-person information gathering, lunches, coffee breaks, and fun events during in-office days.

Some of the best collaboration happens spontaneously when employees are in the office. By refraining from scheduling back-to-back meetings, employees have time to interact, share ideas, and brainstorm organically. Other tips for making the most of both in-office and remote work can be found in the [Strategies for Blended Working at SoCalGas E-Learning](#).

12. How do I respond to an employee who does not find value in the in-office days?

Employees are responsible for their own in-office time and should take ownership of their experience by proactively planning for their days to make them meaningful. However, leaders can support their employees by sharing the best practices above, modeling positive in-office behaviors, and holding Team Norms sessions. A positive in-office experience is the result of planning and preparation and adapting the way we work to maximize collaborative experiences in the office. Supervisors should encourage employees to continue finding new ways of working that maximize the blended environment.

Studies also show that employees spend more time on career development activities and engage in more training activities when in the office, versus at home. While strong performance in an employee's current position is important, it's also important to grow and prepare for the next career opportunity.

13. How do I respond to concerns that employees are just as productive, or more productive, working from home?

While individual productivity is important, so is team productivity. High performers have a positive impact on teams and it's critical to leverage the dynamics of team productivity, which is accomplished through in-person activities. Also, individual productivity is only one important measure of team effectiveness. Other considerations like innovation, collaboration and connection are also important for long-term team success. Looking to the future of SoCalGas, leadership has recognized that in-office time is essential for the type of innovation and high performance that our ambitious goals require. While some tasks are done more efficiently in a remote environment, other key tasks (training, brainstorming, coaching, group problem solving, etc.) have been found to be more meaningful in an in-person environment. One Stanford study found that in-person meetings generate 15-20% more ideas than virtual meetings. The hybrid approach allows employees and leaders to utilize the strengths of each environment.

Lastly, remind employees about the many benefits they are likely to enjoy from their in-office time. In person interactions are a key part of learning, connection, and even career advancement!

14. What if I'm worried that employees are not being productive on their work-from-home days?

Employee performance should be measured on output rather than on the amount of time spent at a desk. Leaders should set clear expectations, work with employees to establish annual goals, and hold employees accountable for meeting expectations and reaching goals. Additionally, employees and leaders should have open dialogue about workload and mutual understanding of the time it takes to complete various responsibilities, which can help in assessing if the employee has capacity to take on additional assignments, if assignments need to be scaled back or reprioritized, or if efficiencies can be found for time-consuming processes. Please consult your HR Business Partner if you need support managing concerns about responsiveness, productivity or work quality.

15. How is adherence to the 3 day minimum tracked?

Supervisors are expected to hold their teams accountable for adhering to in-office expectations. Office utilization rates are monitored for safety and planning purposes by both Facilities and HR, who may reach out to leaders whose groups are not regularly meeting the standard.

16. What should a supervisor do if an employee refuses to come into the office?

If an employee refuses to come in, the supervisor should first seek to understand why. Health-related considerations should be referred to ECS. For all other circumstances, after gathering the facts, the supervisor should reach out to the [HR Business partner](#) for guidance.

17. What is a Primary Work Location?

The Company facility that has been designated as the team / department official reporting site. Employees may occasionally report to other sites (e.g., customer sites / field locations) as part of the blended model, if authorized due to business need or as part of their regular job function.

18. How often should my team report to our Primary Work Location?

The team should report to the Primary Work Location three (3) times per week unless, due to business needs, they are reporting to another company facility or field location.

19. Can the Primary Work Location be individually changed to the location closest to an employee's home?

No, the Primary Work Location cannot be changed to the location closest to an employee's home. Locations are assigned by Facilities based on business needs.

20. Can an employee report to a location other than their primary work location with my approval but no business need / requirement to report to that location?

No, employees should only report to a location other than their primary work location if there is a business need or requirement.

21. Can I schedule meetings at a non-primary work location and have my team report to that location to attend the meeting?

No, meetings should be scheduled at the primary work location, unless there is a business need or requirement to schedule a meeting elsewhere (ie: if you are holding a joint meeting with a group who reports to a different primary work location).