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Sent: Friday, January 12, 2024 3:40 PM

To: EPA ALL STAFF <epaallstaff@calepa.ca.gov>

Subject: Next Steps for Our Hybrid Workplace

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Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year to you and your loved ones!

I am writing to share some important workforce transition news for the new year. Since 2020, we have made a remarkable shift to remote work to protect our health and the health of our families and our communities. Throughout this time, I have been amazed at our Agency's ability to remain responsive to the state's diverse needs, continue to implement our efforts to reduce pollution, and achieve health and environmental benefits for all Californians. We've seen that shifting to remote work options has reduced traffic congestion and emissions and enabled many of our employees to handle homecare and other needs, while excelling in the performance of their job duties.

With nearly four years of experience with a largely remote workforce now behind us, in 2024, we are planning to transition to a more consistent hybrid workplace. To achieve this goal, CalEPA is working to update its agency-wide telework policy to reflect staff working in person at least two days per week. This proposed change would allow us to continue the benefits of remote work, while improving our ability to serve Californians and support a thriving workforce by fostering collaboration, strengthening our teams, enhancing communication, and continuing to experience work-life balance.

With this work model, we will be joining other state agencies in creating a hybrid work culture that strives to combine the benefits and flexibility of remote work with the advantages of in-person work. The updated policy aims to provide flexibility to each Board, Department and Office within the Agency by taking into account work in the field, travel, and use of regional or satellite offices. It also would retain each BDO's discretion to meet their specific operational needs.

We will notify unions of this proposed change in the coming days, which will include an anticipated implementation timeframe of early spring. Once discussions with unions are complete, your BDOs will provide additional information regarding the hybrid workplace transition.

As mentioned above, our goal is to ensure that our hybrid workplace maintains flexibility while promoting deliberative, in-person collaboration among colleagues. You all are critical to the work we do in furthering our mission to restore, protect, and enhance the environment to ensure public health, environmental quality, and economic vitality, and I am optimistic that our hybrid workplace will lead to even more positive and productive outcomes for us and all Californians.

Thank you for all you do!

Yana Garcia
Secretary for Environmental Protection

