



The Impact of Autonomous Vehicles and the Ability to Work Remotely

Insights

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As the debate continues about the potential impact autonomous vehicles will have on traffic patterns, automobile safety, commute times, real estate valuations, and a slew of other factors, employers may soon have to contemplate changes in their own work practices. Specifically, businesses should begin to review their remote work policies and plan for how autonomous vehicles will impact an employee's ability to work remotely.

For some time now, employers have been concerned about the impact remote workers have on company culture, and have at times struggled to ensure accountability of remote workers. Employers have also faced increased security risks due to employees using their personal devices to work remotely. Similar issues are likely to confront employers as we move from the digital age into an age of automation. Employers should look back to previous debates regarding working remotely from home to help determine how they will develop policies and practices to adapt to a new age and ensure remote workers can securely and productively connect to their employer's network.

Some analysts are hypothesizing that increased efficiency and connectivity offered by autonomous vehicles will foster a "post-urban" society in which a larger percentage of the population will live in the suburbs and in rural areas. If companies still require workers in suburbs and rural areas to make the lengthy commute to their office, they may have to contend with employees coming in "late" and citing the work they performed while commuting in a driverless vehicle. Additionally, workers may be motivated to take longer out-of-office lunch breaks, knowing that they can work on their way to and from a restaurant if necessary. This also could be problematic from a timekeeping perspective for employees that are not exempt from overtime under the FLSA and other state wage and hour laws.

Autonomous vehicles will also increase the risk of remote workers subjecting their employer's network to malware attacks, misplacing their personal mobile devices, and inadvertently disclosing confidential and proprietary information.

Employers should review and potentially revise their remote work policies to ensure that they are establishing clear expectations for remote workers. A remote work policy should address issues related to the protection of confidential data and proprietary information, and protocols for accessing the company's network. By creating and implementing strict user guidelines for remote

workers, employers can minimize the potential of a security breach from a remote location. Employers who have remote workers should specify precisely who has authorized access from a remote location and describe in detail the network protocols that must be used in order to access the company's network.

In addition to ensuring that policies are up to date with current technology, employers should also focus on properly training their employees about their remote work policies and best practices for protecting confidential information.

In addition to new policies and procedures, autonomous cars may also impose additional other demands and expectations for employees. Depending on their employer's expectations, employees could see an increase in their workload rather than additional time to dedicate to personal pursuits. Although many workers have smartphones that make them accessible throughout the day, employees are typically not expected to respond to work emails or join a video conference during their commute. However, this expectation may change as autonomous cars are specifically designed with work in mind. The car as a mobile workspace is already being considered, as Volvo and BMW have announced Skype for Business integrations for some of their vehicles. Some automakers have also already started imagining what the interior of self-driving cars will need to look like for maximum productivity to be achieved by workers.

For some office workers, the car may become a traveling mobile desk. For example, service professionals with independent practices may use their car as their office rather than carry the overhead of a car and a physical brick and mortar location. The car as a mobile office could replace a home office and allow professionals to bring their office to clients rather than force clients to come to them. In this way, autonomous vehicles have the potential to create an entirely new type of work space and expectation for customers.

As traditional automakers and tech companies continue to develop technology for fully autonomous vehicles, employers should review their policies and procedures and start strategizing on the impact of employees being able to work remotely during their commutes.

If you have questions or concerns regarding remote workplace policies in the age of autonomous vehicles, contact [Brett Owens](#) or any member of our [Autonomous Vehicles Practice Group](#).

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