In the current COVID-19 mitigation environment, central stations may be challenged to operate in complete compliance with UL Standards. UL expects that stations will make every reasonable effort to exercise options available in UL standards. However, in cases where delivering ongoing monitoring services requires alternate procedures, we request that stations document those procedures and be prepared to share them with UL if/when necessary as a basis for maintaining their UL Certification.

As a last resort, some stations may be considering use of home based operators to process signals. Based on input from industry, UL recommends considering the following guidelines.

Note – For US based stations monitoring National Industrial Security System accounts, any deviations from UL827 language need to be discussed with and approved by the relevant US federal security agency with jurisdiction.

VIRTUAL WORKPLACE GUIDELINES

These guidelines are designed to provide procedural guidance to monitoring station management and operators who perform job duties at alternative work sites, most specifically at home offices.

- Virtual work arrangements require remote operators to be self-motivated and work well with minimal supervision.

The following guidelines apply to the virtual environment:

- Virtual workplace operators should be provided with a laptop computer or other arrangement that provides battery backup. Home/personal computers should not be used.
  - Computers should be operated with charger plugged in to provide uninterrupted power to the machine
  - Hard drives should be protected with whole disk encryption, with provision for a system administrator level master password to minimize risk of complete lockout
  - Computers should be configured to prevent users from deleting files, installing their own programs, or allowing alarm system monitoring software to be pushed to the background while a user is logged in

- Connections between virtual workplace computers and central station automation systems should be:
  - Verified as having sufficient bandwidth to perform the intended job functions
  - Made through a secure, virtual private network (VPN) that uses 256 bit AES encryption to connect directly from the virtual workplace computer to a VPN server set up at the monitoring station or automation system host
  - Supervised by the station so that un-resettable loss of connection is annunciated and action to restore connection is started
  - Station IT staff and their contact information should be available to virtual workplace employees at all times

- At-home employees should have the ability to control the use of virtual workplace internet connections by others in the home.
    - Use of parental permission features or other administrative network access controls should be considered when a multi-user environment warrants them

- Stations should ensure that virtual workplace employees have access to voice communication capabilities that are required to perform their job junctions.

- When processing alarms virtual workplace employees should arrange their workspace so that:
    - It is designated for work and segregated from the rest of the home to minimize distraction and noise
    - Other people cannot view the monitoring screen or any other information
        - Stations could consider providing and/or requiring use of a screen polarize to reduce monitoring screen visibility to potential on-lookers

- Multifactor authentication should be required at every shift change.

- If a virtual workplace employee must leave a workstation unattended while on shift, the employee should lock the computer in a way that requires reauthentication to be granted access.

- When not on shift, the computer should be in shutdown and put in a secure place to minimize the chance of damage or theft.

- Stations should consider increasing the level of communication with employees about security and privacy as malicious actors are aggressively trying to take advantage the current unsettled environment
    - Virtual workplace operators should be advised to not release their home address and telephone number to non-employees of the company.

- Responsibly balancing virtual workplace responsibilities with those of a primary care provider for a child or dependent is challenging during difficult times. Stations should work with virtual workplace employees to assure an understanding of responsibilities before and throughout the term of an at-home assignment.

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