

Google to keep most of its employees at home until July 2021

27 July 2020, by Michael Liedtke



Google is extending its work-from-home option for most employees through July 2021, CEO Sundar Pichai says

Google has decided that most of its 200,000 employees and contractors should work from home through next June, a sobering assessment of the pandemic's potential staying power from the company providing the answers for the world's most trusted internet search engine.

The remote-work order issued Monday by Google CEO Sundar Pichai also affects other companies owned by Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc. It marks a six-month extension of Google's previous plan to keep most of its offices closed through the rest of this year.

"I know this extended timeline may come with mixed emotions and I want to make sure you're taking care of yourselves," wrote Pichai, who is also Alphabet's CEO, in an email to employees.

Pichai's decision was first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

The prolonged lockdown of Google's offices could influence other major employers to take similar

precautions, given that the technology industry has been at the forefront of the shift to remote work that has been triggered by the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Even before the World Health Organization declared a pandemic on March 11, Google and many other prominent tech firms had been telling their employees to work from home.

Google had originally planned to allow a significant number of employees to begin returning to its Mountain View, California, headquarters and other offices during the summer. But the pandemic's ongoing spread prompted Google to push back the reopening until January and now it has prompted yet another delay.

Besides helping protect people from the virus, the new July 2021 target date for reopening Google's offices should make it easier for workers with children to adjust to schools that aren't allowing students to return to campus next month and in September. It will also make it easier for employees to sign one-year leases if they decide to rent a home somewhere else while working outside the office.

"I hope this will offer the flexibility you need to balance work with taking care of yourselves and your loved ones over the next 12 months," Pichai wrote.

Pichai's email noted that Google and Alphabet have been able to reopen some offices in 42 countries, although he didn't specify which.

But new guidelines mean Google's biggest offices will remain largely unoccupied through June 2021. The decision affects more than 123,000 employees on the payroll of Google and other Alphabet companies, as well as 80,000 contractors that normally work on the companies' campuses.

The pandemic has also prompted several other tech companies to inform their workers they won't have to return to work this year. Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey has taken the most extreme step so far by telling the messaging service's employees they will never have to return to the office, if they don't want, an offer he is also extending to workers at Square, a payment processing service that he also runs.

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