

# Microsoft's Return-to-Office Mandate Will Begin in a Few Months. Here's What We Know.

In August, it was reported that Microsoft was planning to mandate its employees back to the office "at least" three days a week as soon as January 2026. (Employees currently can work remotely "half" of the workweek.)

Now, according to an internal email sent to Microsoft staff on Tuesday, the company has finalized its plans and is issuing a return-to-office (RTO) mandate in three phases, beginning at the end of February 2026, according to *Business Insider*.

"In the AI era, we are moving faster than ever, building world-class technology that changes how people live and work, and how organizations everywhere operate," reads the email from Microsoft HR chief Amy Coleman. "If you reflect on our history, the most meaningful breakthroughs happen when we build on each other's ideas together, in real time."

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As of June 30, Microsoft employed 228,000 workers, with 125,000 located in the U.S.

According to the email, the first phase will focus on employees who live in the Puget Sound, Washington area, and will begin around February 23. "If you live within 50 miles of a Microsoft office, you'll be expected to work onsite three days a week starting [at the end of February]," the email reads.

A general view of the Microsoft Zizhu Campus in Minghang, Shanghai, China, on June 30, 2025. International employees will learn more about their RTO in 2026. Ying Tang/NurPhoto via Getty Images

The RTO mandate will then expand to other offices in the U.S. and, eventually, internationally, for which planning will begin in 2026, according to the email.

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The memo said that the rest of the staff will hear from their “EVP or organizational leadership today with specific guidance,” the email reads. “If you are outside of the Puget Sound area, you do not need to take any action at this time unless your EVP communicates otherwise.”

“We’ve looked at how our teams work best, and the data is clear: when people work together in person more often, they thrive—they are more energized, empowered, and they deliver stronger results,” Coleman wrote.

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