



Disconnect From Work Policy

1. Purpose

The Township of Southgate is committed to maintaining the health and wellbeing of all employees. To encourage and support employees in balancing their working and personal lives, the Township has implemented this policy to help employees disconnect from work and achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance.

2. Policy Scope

This Policy applies to all Township employees including full-time, part-time, seasonal and contract employees whether working remotely or in the workplace they report to. This policy does not apply to volunteer firefighters.

3. Applicable Legislation

This policy is written in accordance with Bill 27, Working for Workers Act, 2001 and the Employment Standards Act, 2000, as amended.

4. Definitions

- a. "Disconnecting from work" under this Policy means not engaging in work or work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video meetings and calls or sending or reviewing other messages such that employees are free from working outside of their normal working hours in accordance with the Employment Standards Act, 2000, as amended, and this Policy, excluding the exceptions detailed below.
- b. "Employment Standards Act" mean the Employment Standards Act, 2000, as amended, including any regulations made under the Act, and otherwise referred to as the "ESA".

5. Disconnecting from Work

- a. An employee's ability to disconnect from work depends on the Township's operational needs and the duties and obligations of the employee's position, subject to an employee's employment contract and their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA.
- b. In the ordinary course of business there will be situations when it is necessary to contact colleagues outside of an employee's normal working hours, including but not limited to:
 - i. Call-ins and on call for winter operator duties, by-law enforcement, fire department calls, road and water related interruptions and emergencies;
 - ii. Time sensitive matters where it is important to gain information prior to the next business day;
 - iii. Checking availability for scheduling/planning;
 - iv. Where unforeseeable circumstances may arise related to public safety;



- v. When an emergency may arise related to public safety;
 - vi. When an employee attends off-site, job related training courses that requires longer hours based on the industry standard curriculum and workload;
 - vii. Where employees voluntarily wish to complete courses or study for exams on their personal time to advance their skills and preparation for increased job responsibilities or future career opportunities;
 - viii. Where employees voluntarily wish to communicate with one another for work-related purposes outside of their normal working hours;
 - ix. Other business or operational reasons that require contact outside of an employee's normal working hours.
- c. Nothing in this Policy precludes the Township or other employees of the Township from contacting colleagues outside of what may be considered normal working hours or standard business hours for the circumstances as outlined above, or as otherwise required to meet operational needs, subject to any rights or entitlements the receiving colleague or employee may have under their employment contract and their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA.

6. Working Hours

While employee working hours will vary within the Township, each employee's hours of work are defined by past practices and their employment contract.

If an employee has questions regarding their normal working hours, they are to consult their job description, supervisor, manager, Human Resources or the CAO. If the employee is regularly unable to complete their work or attend work-related communications within their normal working hours, they are to notify their manager.

It is expected that all employees are able to complete their work, including reviewing and responding to any work-related communications, during their normal working hours. The Township has no expectation that employees engage in work or work-related communications outside of their normal working hours, subject to the exceptions detailed in Section 5.

7. Employer Obligations

The Township will make efforts to ensure that all employees, regardless of their place of work, are:

- a. informed of what their normal working hours are and are informed of the circumstances in which they will be expected to engage in work-related communications outside their normal working hours; and



- b. able to take applicable meal, rest periods and afterhours time free from work as required by law and/or their employment agreement; and
- c. able to take earned vacation time or other leave entitlements as required by law and/or their employment agreement.

8. Employee Obligations

The Township expects all employees to comply with the following in the course of their work. Employees must:

- a. cooperate fully with any applicable administrative processes utilised by the Township to record working time and/or update their working status (e.g. out-of-office messages), including when working remotely, flexible hours or when mobile; and
- b. be mindful of colleagues', customers' and other third parties' working hours by not routinely emailing or calling outside of normal working hours or causing situations of expecting answers or responses outside of normal working hours; and
- c. ensure that they take ownership of their work, properly manage their time and meet the Township's operational needs; and
- d. comply with the Township's Personnel Policy in relation to overtime work; and
- e. notify their supervisor or manager if they feel their workload is preventing them from being able to take breaks or hours free from work periods that they are entitled to.

9. Reporting Concerns

- a. All employees are expected and required to report any concerns or issues they may have which they feel is impacting their ability to disconnect-from-work.
- b. Employees are encouraged to report such concerns or issues in writing to their immediate supervisor. If that is not appropriate or the matter cannot be resolved by doing so, employees should direct their concerns or issues in writing to Human Resources or the CAO.
- c. Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting such concerns as outlined above.

10. Related Policies

The following policies must be taken into consideration and followed when working from home:

- Policy #1 Personnel Policy
- Policy #10 Employee Code of Conduct
- Policy #33A Occupational Health and Safety Policy

11. Policy Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed at minimum every three (3) years and updated if required.