

TITLE: Disconnecting from Work Policy
POLICY NO.: POL-ADMIN-01-2022
APPROVAL DATE: May 24, 2022
EFFECTIVE DATE: May 24, 2022
POLICY AMENDED: N/A

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

Work related pressure and the inability to disconnect from employment can lead to stress and deterioration of mental health. The purpose of this policy is to support staff wellness and minimize excessive sources of work-related stress. The Township of West Lincoln ("Township") encourages and supports employees in prioritizing their own wellbeing, in part by having the capacity to disconnect from work as appropriate.

Disconnecting from work is important for an individual's wellbeing and helps employees achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. The Township supports employees in balancing their work and personal lives, whether working traditional hours in the workplace, remotely or flexibly. This policy will encourage employees to disconnect from work where both possible and appropriate.

DEFINITIONS

Disconnect from Work: means to not engage in any work-related communications, including emails, phone calls, video calls, sending or reviewing messages so as to be free from the performance of work.

Collective Agreement: means any collective agreement in place from time to time between the Township and a Union representing its Workers.

Exceptional Circumstances: as recognized under the Employment Standards Act, 2000, are those circumstances in which excess hours of work are required to avoid serious interference with the Township's business or operations in order to:

- Deal with an emergency
- Ensure the continued delivery of essential public services as a result of unforeseen occurrences
- Ensure continuous processes or seasonal operations as a result of unforeseen occurrences
- To carry out urgent repair work to the Township's plant or equipment.

Worker: for the purpose of this policy a “Worker” shall mean all Township employees (including full time, part time and casual employees).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Workers as defined herein (whether they are working remotely or in the workplace). This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Employment Standards Act, 2000 (the “ESA”), other applicable legislation, any employment contract, any Collective Agreement, the Township’s associated policies and any other policies that may become applicable and/or relevant to hours of work and working conditions.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Employer Responsibilities

- 1.1 The Township shall make best efforts to ensure that all Workers, regardless of their place of work, are:
 - 1.1.1 Adequately informed regarding their regular working hours and the circumstances in which they will be expected to engage in work-related communications outside their regular working hours;
 - 1.1.2 Able to take applicable meal, rest periods, hours free work, public holidays and vacation as required by the ESA, by employment contract, associated policies, the Collective Agreement and/or other applicable legislation; and
 - 1.1.3 Able to take vacation or other leave entitlements, as required by the ESA, by employment contract, associated policies, the Collective Agreement and/or other applicable legislation.
- 1.2 The Township shall comply with the employment standards provided for under the ESA, any employment contract, any associated policies, any Collective Agreement and/or other applicable legislation (including standards regarding hours of work, excess hours of work, meal periods, rest periods, overtime, hours free from work, public holidays and vacation).

2. Worker Responsibilities

- 2.1 All Workers shall comply with the following the course of their work:
 - 2.1.1 Cooperate fully with any applicable mechanism utilised by the Township to record working time or update their working status (i.e. out of office messages), including when working remotely or flexibly;
 - 2.1.2 Be mindful of the working hours and working conditions for colleagues, customers/clients, vendors and other third parties;
 - 2.1.3 Ensure that they take ownership of their work and meet the Township’s operational needs;
 - 2.1.4 Work the hours required or necessary in Exceptional Circumstances as permitted under the ESA;

- 2.1.5 Comply with the Township's vacation and overtime policy, including the requirement to obtain approval before performing overtime work; and
- 2.1.6 Notify their supervisor or manager, in writing and in a timely manner, of any right or entitlement they were unable to exercise and the reasons why.

3. Ability to Disconnect from Work

- 3.1 A Worker's ability to Disconnect from Work is dependent upon the Township's operational needs and the duties and responsibilities of the Worker's position, subject to the ESA, any employment contract, any associated policies, any Collective Agreement and/or other applicable legislation.
- 3.2 Workers shall be required to work excess hours in Exceptional Circumstances as permitted under the ESA.
- 3.3 Nothing in this policy shall afford Workers any right to Disconnect from Work beyond any right under the ESA, other applicable legislation, any employment contract, any Collective Agreement or the Township's associated policies regarding rights or entitlements to hours of work, excess hours of work, hours free from work, overtime or overtime pay, meal and/or rest periods, public holidays and vacation.
- 3.4 Nothing in this policy is intended to amend or supersede any grievance procedure or other aspect of any applicable Collective Agreement.

4. Reporting Concerns

- 4.1 All Workers are expected and required to report any concerns or issues they may have regarding their ability to Disconnect from Work in a timely manner.
- 4.2 All Workers are encouraged to report any such concern or issue to their immediate supervisor. If that is no appropriate or the matter cannot be resolved by doing so, Workers should direct their concerns or issues to Human Resources.
- 4.3 Workers shall not be subject to reprisal for reporting any such concern or issue as outlined above.

5. Communication and Retention

- 5.1 The Township shall provide a copy of this policy to each Worker within 30 calendar days of implementation. Should any changes be made to the policy after its implementation, the Township shall provide each Worker with a copy of the revised policy within 30 days of the changes being made.
- 5.2 The Township shall provide a copy of this policy to all new Workers upon onboarding and within 30 calendar days of the Worker commencing employment with the Township.

5.3 The Township shall retain a copy of this and any revised version of this policy for three years after it ceased to be in effect.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

[Collective Agreement – April 2019 – March 2023](#)

[Non-Union Personnel Policy POL-C-01-02 \(as amended\)](#)

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

[Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

[Ontario Employment Standards Act](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)