

Disconnecting From Work Policy



Section	Date	Approved by	Page	of
Human Resources	September 20, 2022	By-law Number: 124-2022	1	5
Subsection	Supersedes By-law Number: N/A		Policy No. HR-2-18	

Purpose

The City of Kenora is committed to promoting a healthy work environment by encouraging and supporting employee's work-life balance which includes disconnecting from work. The purpose of this policy is to fulfill the Employer's obligation under Bill 27 *Working for Workers Act, 2021* by ensuring employees are disconnecting from work outside of their normal working hours, subject to reasonable exceptions.

Scope

This policy applies to all City employees who have been approved and assigned access to their personal and/or City-issued technology, for the purpose of performing remote/hybrid work, and/or are required to remain connected to the workplace outside their normal hours of work to perform the operational requirements of their position and job function.

Definitions

Disconnecting from Work: not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

Emergency: a situation or impending situation that requires timely or immediate attention and/or action.

Unforeseen Circumstance(s): an unforeseeable incident or occurrence that unless addressed can reasonably lead to an adverse impact on the City's services, programs and /or impacts the health and safety of employees or the community.

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Roles & Responsibilities

The Employer is responsible for:

- Providing a copy of the written policy to each employee within 30 days of preparing or amending this policy;
- Providing a copy of the written policy to every new employee at the time of orientation within 30 days of the date of commencement of employment; and
- Reviewing and amending this policy as often as may be required

Leader/Supervisors are responsible for:

- Respecting an employee's right to disconnect from work by not routinely emailing or calling outside the normal hours of work;
- Communicating the expectation if any, of employees to read or reply to work-related emails or answer work-related phone calls outside of their normal hours of work;
- Advising employees of the limited instances in which they may be expected to report and perform work outside of their normal hours of work;
- Discussing and defining emergency and/or operational requirements, including who is generating the contact E.g. Leader/supervisor, direct report, key stakeholder (Council, Citizen, Partner, etc.) that would require contact either through communication methods established with the employee directly or through the appropriate collective agreement;
- Communicating the requirement for their employee(s) to turn on out-of-office notifications and/or changing of voicemail messages, when they are not scheduled to work, including listing contacts who are providing coverage and escalation points.
- Following call-out, on-call, and standby collective agreement provisions where applicable, including emergencies and unforeseen circumstances;
- Establishing and communicating the process by which employees will be contacted to respond for overtime, emergencies and unforeseen circumstances;
- Addressing and providing response to any employee questions or concerns about this policy;
- Role modelling appropriate disconnect behaviours after their own normal hours of work finish for the workday.

Employees are responsible for:

- Reviewing and acknowledging this policy;
- Performing the required daily and weekly hours of work as specified for their position which includes acceptance of any call-in, on-call, or standby requirements for their role;
- Communicating any need for consideration when engaged in work off hours.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that they engage in work-related communications during their normal working hours;

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- Fully cooperating with any time recording methods which the City uses to track hours of work;
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that their coworkers are able to disconnect from work in accordance with this policy; and
- Notifying their direct supervisor if they feel undue pressure to work or respond to work-related communications outside of their normal working hours, or if they are otherwise unable to comply with this Policy

Working Hours

While employee working hours will vary within the organization, each employee's hours of work are defined by the Collective Agreement, their employment contract and/or by agreement with their Leader/Supervisor.

If you have any questions regarding your normal hours of work, please consult with your Leader/Supervisor.

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

If you are regularly unable to complete your work or attend to work-related communications within your normal hours of work, please notify your Leader/Supervisor.

Exceptions

There are situations when it is necessary for employees to perform work or communicate with coworkers and/or Leader/Supervisor outside of their normal hours of work, including, but not limited to the following:

- Where an emergency or unforeseen circumstance arises, with or without notice
- Assisting or covering a shift for a coworker on short notice
- Where the nature of the employee's duties requires work and/or work-related communications outside of their normal hours of work including but not limited to stand-by, on-call, call-in, overtime shifts.
- Where an employee requests or agrees to work certain hours or have flexible working hours; and
- Other unusual circumstances as defined by your role and responsibility.

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Procedure

Ability to Disconnect

An employee's ability to disconnect from work depends on the City's operational needs and the duties and obligations of the employee's position, subject to policy, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the Employment Standards Act (ESA).

Employees may need to be occasionally contacted outside of their normal hours of work if an emergency or an unforeseeable circumstance arises, and/or when operational requirements arise. This contact will be made through communication methods established between the Leader/Supervisor and the employee.

Where a Leader/Supervisor communicates outside an employee's normal hours of work and no immediate response is required, employees should not feel they need to respond until their next scheduled hours of work. All employees should be mindful when sending work-related emails, texts, and telephone calls recognizing an employee's normal hours of work.

Employees should make all reasonable efforts to book meetings and calls during the attendees' normal hours of work, subject to the exceptions detailed above. Similarly, employees should only review and send work-related communications during their normal working hours, subject to the exceptions detailed above.

Work-related communications should not be sent to or from employees' personal mobile phones, personal e-mail addresses, personal telephone numbers or other personal devices, subject to the exceptions detailed above or an agreement to communicate in this manner.

This policy does not apply in situations where an employee voluntarily wishes to communicate with another employee for work-related purposes outside of their normal working hours.

Automatic Replies

Employees, including members of the management team, should use communication methods such as out-of-office alerts, voice messages and calendar settings to indicate their normal hours of work and when they will be away for an extended period of time. Employees are encouraged to use other technologies, such as 'delayed send' and automatic reply emails, where their hours of work may not coincide with a coworker's hours of work.

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Handheld and Remote Work Devices

The City may provide some employees with various City-issued technology, such as a mobile phone, laptop, tablet or other device to assist with working remotely. These devices are provided to employees to encourage flexibility in completing their work. Possession of these devices does not mean that an employee is expected to make themselves available for work or work-related communications outside of their normal working hours.

I have read the Disconnecting from Work Policy set forth above. I understand its contents, agree to abide by it. I also agree to seek clarification from my Leader/Supervisor regarding any aspect of the Policy on which I am unclear.

Date

Employee Signature

Print Name