



Policies and Procedures Manual
Disconnecting from Work Policy
Schedule “A” to By-law No. 2022-55

Policy Statement:

The Township of Algonquin Highlands is committed to being a dynamic employer that attracts, supports and retains talented and dedicated staff. The health and wellbeing of our employees is of the utmost importance to us, and The Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands encourages and supports our employees in prioritizing their own wellbeing.

Purpose:

Disconnecting from work is important for an individual’s wellbeing, and helps employees achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. Disconnecting from work *means to not engage 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.*

This policy is intended to support our employees in balancing their working and personal lives, by encouraging employees to disconnect from work outside of their normal working hours.

This Policy should be read alongside the Township’s associated policies, any relevant and applicable legislation, and any other policy that may become applicable and/or relevant.

Scope:

This Policy applies to all employees, as defined by the Ontario *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (“ESA”). For clarity, “employee” under this Policy means only those employees of the Township which are considered employees under the ESA.

Policy:

1. 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:
 - (a) checking availability for scheduling;



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- (b) to fill in on short notice for a colleague who has called in sick or is unavailable for work;
 - (c) where unforeseeable circumstances may arise;
 - (d) where an emergency may arise;
 - (e) where employees voluntarily wish to communicate with one another for work-related purposes outside of their normal working hours; or
 - (f) other business or operational reasons that require contact outside of an employee’s normal working hours.
2. Nothing in this Policy precludes the Township, or other employees of the Township, from contacting employees or colleagues outside their normal working hours for circumstances as outlined above, or as otherwise required to meet operational needs, subject to any rights or other entitlements the receiving colleague or employee may have under the Ontario *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (the “ESA”).

Employer Obligations

3. The Township will take steps to ensure that all employees, regardless of their place of work, are:
- (a) informed of what their normal working hours are reasonably expected to be, and are informed of the circumstances in which they will be expected to engage in work-related communications outside their normal working hours
 - (b) not asked to exceed a 48-hour working week unless they have signed an Excess Hours of Work Agreement or otherwise permitted under the ESA
 - (c) able to take applicable meal, rest periods and hours free from work as required by law or contract
 - (d) able to take vacation or other leave entitlements as required by law or contract, and not be asked to perform work during this time
 - (e) able to work in a healthy and safe working environment.



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Employee Obligations

4. The Township expects all employees to comply with the following in the course of their work:
 - (a) ensure that they manage their own working time and consider their obligation as an employee, while working, to take reasonable care to protect their health and safety and that of their colleagues
 - (b) co-operate fully with any appropriate and/or reasonable mechanism utilized by the Township to record working time or update their working status (e.g. out-of-office messages, electronic calendar), including when working remotely, flexibly or when mobile
 - (c) be mindful of colleagues’ working hours (e.g. by not routinely emailing or calling outside of normal working hours or expecting answers or responses outside of normal working hours)
 - (d) comply with the Township’s overtime policy, including any requirements to obtain prior approval before performing overtime work
 - (e) notify their supervisor or manager in writing of any meal, rest, break or hours-free-from-work period which they are entitled to but were unable to use due to performing work for the Township on a particular occasion, and why this occurred
 - (f) speak with their supervisor or manager if they feel their workload is preventing them from being able to take meal, rest, break or hours-free-from-work periods that they are entitled to.

Working Hours

5. An employee’s normal working hours are as set out in their employment contract.
6. Normal working hours for employees may vary. It is important to remember that all employees’ ability to disconnect from work is within the context of their own individual work schedules.
7. Despite the establishment of normal working hours, all employees recognize that there may be busier periods or other circumstances where work must be completed outside of normal working hours.



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Communications

8. Where possible, work-related communications should be checked or sent during normal working hours. Due to differing/non-standard work schedules within the Township, some employees may send communications at times which are inopportune for other employees, such as evenings or weekends. The sender should consider the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance, and the recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond until their working time recommences (or unless otherwise required and stipulated within the communication per the circumstances as outlined at section 1).
9. If a manager/supervisor sends communications outside applicable normal working hours and it requires immediate or prompt response, the response expectation should be set out in the communication.

Meetings

10. Where possible, meetings should be scheduled during the Township’s standard hours of operation, or normal working hours if the attendees have work schedules outside of the Township’s standard hours of operation.
11. Those organizing meetings should be mindful of the time of those whom they are inviting to attend, and ensure that those invited will play an active role and have something to contribute to the matters being discussed.

Vacation

12. All employees are expected to take their allotted vacation entitlements as set out in the Township’s Vacation Entitlement Policy.
13. Employees taking vacation are expected to use all applicable tools to update their status and to ensure that staff, Council members and members of the public are informed of their status as off on vacation, including but not limited (eg: out of office message in Outlook).

Reporting Concerns

14. 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. Employees should report such concerns or issues, in writing, to their immediate supervisor. If that is not appropriate or the matter cannot be



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resolved by doing so, employees should direct their concerns or issues to the Chief Administrative Officer.

15. Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting such concerns as outlined above.

Posting, Notice and Retention

16. The Township shall provide a copy of this Policy to each employee within 30 calendar days of implementation. Should any changes be made to the Policy after its implementation, the Township shall provide each employee a copy of the revised Policy within 30 days of the changes being made.
17. The Township shall provide a copy of this Policy to all new employees upon onboarding and within 30 calendar days of the employee commencing employment with the Township.
18. The Township shall retain a copy of this and any revised version of this Policy for three years after it ceases to be in effect.