

# Disconnecting From Work Policy

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**Category: Legislated Policy**  
**Department: Human Resources**  
**Effective Date: TBD 2024**

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## Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate the City of Cornwall's ('the City') support for employees to disconnect from work, when appropriate, to assist in achieving a healthy work-life balance.

Employees are expected to disconnect from work during their non-working hours. Since some of the operations at the City of Cornwall run on 24/7 schedule, the working and non-working hours could be different for different employees. Employee working hours are set out in the respective employment agreement or collective agreement, as applicable.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract employees at the City of Cornwall.

## Legislation and Applicable Regulations

This Policy will be governed by and interpreted in accordance with all applicable legislation, including (but not limited to) [Ontario's Employment Standards Act, 2000](#) (the "ESA") and [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).

## Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

**Disconnecting from Work:** The term "disconnecting from work" is defined in the ESA and means not engaging in all types of work-related communications such as emails, telephone calls, video calls or sending or reviewing other messages, to be free from the performance of work. As the list of work-related communications is inclusive, and not exhaustive, other types of work-related communications could also fall under this definition.

**Non-Working Hours:** The period outside of an employee's regular working hours, which may include evenings, weekends, and official holidays, depending on the type of worker and shift schedule, as set out in a Collective Agreement, individual letters of offers and City Policies.

**Emergency Situations:** Unforeseen and critical situations requiring immediate attention that could not be reasonably anticipated or planned for in advance.

**Supervisors and Managers:** Individuals in leadership positions responsible for overseeing and managing the work of a team or department.

**Out-of-Office Notifications:** Automated responses informing senders that the recipient is currently unavailable and providing alternative contacts during a specified period.

**Email Scheduling:** The feature allows users to compose emails at one time and schedule them to be sent at a later time.

**Employee Well-being:** The overall health, satisfaction, and work-life balance of employees, including physical and mental well-being.

**Working Hours:** The period during which employee is expected to fulfill their responsibilities and job duties. Employee's working hours are those as determined in the employment agreement or collective agreement, as applicable.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The City, its management and employees must work together to ensure that everyone is able to disconnect from work outside of normal working hours in accordance with this Policy.

### **Directors and Senior Management**

- Ensure employees are provided with information regarding their normal hours of work given the nature of their work and any other information required to assist employees with complying with this Policy.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that management and employees are able to disconnect from the workplace at appropriate times as detailed in this Policy.
- Refrain from penalising or taking any other reprisal action against employees who have questions regarding this Policy or request compliance with it. Legitimate employer direction and/or corrective action towards employees is not considered "reprisal action."

### **General Manager of Human Resources**

- Develop and maintain this Policy and ensure annual reviews of the policy to align with applicable legislative changes.
- Provide new employees with a copy of this Policy within 30 days of the employee's start date.
- Provide existing employees with a copy of any amended versions of the Policy within 30 days of the amendment.
- Provide advice and guidance to management and employees to support this Policy.
- Receive and manage employee inquiries related to the application of this Policy.
- Develop programs and campaigns to support this Policy as well as the overall health, satisfaction, and work-life balance of employees, including physical and mental well-being.

### **Supervisors and Managers**

- Set an example by respecting employees' non-working hours and modelling compliance with this Policy within their respective teams.
- Advise employees of the limited instances in which they may be expected to perform work outside of their normal hours of work.
- Encourage and actively promote the use of accrued time off and breaks to support a healthy work-life balance among their team members.
- Support the overall health, satisfaction, and work-life balance of employees, including physical and mental well-being.
- Monitor the workload of their team members to ensure it is manageable within regular working hours. This includes regularly checking in with employees to assess their workload and identifying any potential issues that could lead to an inability to disconnect after regular work hours.
- Respond to employees' inquiries and resolve issues raised in collaboration with Human Resources.
- Responsible for contacting Human Resources to seek guidance in the application of this Policy.

## Employees

- Responsible for familiarizing themselves with this Policy and adhering to its guidelines.
- Cooperate with any time recording methods which the City uses to track hours of work, when applicable.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that their colleagues are able to disconnect from work in accordance with this Policy.
- Notify management 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.
- Responsible for contacting Human Resources to seek guidance in the application of this Policy.

## Communications

Employees are encouraged to disconnect from work-related communications, including emails, phone calls, and messages, during non-working hours. In the case of genuine emergencies that require immediate attention outside of regular working hours, employees are expected to respond accordingly. However, it is recognized that such instances should be infrequent, exceptional, and based on operational requirements.

## Technology Guidelines

Employees are encouraged to utilize out-of-office notifications during periods of leave to inform colleagues and stakeholders of their unavailability and provide an alternative contact person. Employees are advised to use the email scheduling feature to send emails during regular working hours, even if they compose them outside of those hours.

In the course of their duties, some employees may use corporate owned - personally enabled electronic devices such as: mobile phones, laptops, tablets, etc. These devices are provided to employees to allow flexibility in how employees complete their work and do not imply that employees must make themselves available for work at all times.

## Employee Well-being

The City recognizes the importance of employee well-being and acknowledges the potential negative impact of constant connectivity on mental health. Employees are encouraged to take breaks and time off, in accordance with applicable Policies, individual set terms and conditions of employment and Collective Agreements, to recharge, and supervisors are urged to support a healthy work-life balance.

## Policy Communication and Awareness

The City will provide awareness programs to employees to educate them about the importance of disconnecting from work and the potential impact of excessive connectivity on their well-being.

## Exceptions

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

- Where an emergency or an unforeseen business or operational circumstance arises, with or without notice;

- Where the nature of the employee’s duties requires work and/or work-related communications outside of their normal hours of work;
- An employee’s request or agreement to work certain hours or have flexible working hours;

## **Complaint Procedure**

Employees are encouraged to first attempt to resolve the issue informally by discussing it with their immediate supervisor or manager. The employee may express their concerns and seek clarification regarding the application of the policy.

If the issue remains unresolved after the informal discussion, or if the employee is uncomfortable addressing it directly with their supervisor, they may contact the General Manager of Human Resources for support and investigation, if necessary.

## **Violations and Consequences**

Any violations of this policy will be addressed in accordance with the City disciplinary procedures. The severity of the violation will be taken into consideration when determining appropriate consequences.

## **Review and Revision**

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any necessary revisions will be made to align with changes in legislation, technology, and work practices. If the policy is changed, employees will receive a copy of the written policy within 30 calendar days of the policy change.

By adhering to this Disconnecting from Work Policy, employees contribute to a healthier workplace culture that promotes work-life balance and employee well-being.

## **Related Policies**

This Policy is intended to outline the expectations and rights of employees to disconnect from work and should be read in conjunction with the City’s other applicable policies, procedures and guidelines including but not limited to:

- **IT Acceptable Use Policy**

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Manon L. Levesque  
City Clerk

**X**

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Matthew Stephenson  
Interim General Manager, Human Services

**X**

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Tracey Bailey  
General Manager, Financial Services

**X**

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Mathieu Fleury  
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