

Township of Brock Corporate Policy



Policy Name: Disconnecting from Work Policy

Policy Type: Administration

Policy Number: AP-31

Reference: (i.e. Council Resolution No. 20-19)

Date Approved: XXXXXX

Date Revised: XXXXXXXX

Approval By: Council

Point of Contact: Ingrid Svelnis CAO

1. Policy statement

The health and wellbeing of our employees is of the utmost importance to the Township of Brock (the “Township”). The Township encourages and supports employees in prioritizing their own wellbeing and promoting a healthy workplace for all its employees. Disconnecting from work is important for an individual’s wellbeing, and helps employees achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance.

The Township recognizes that every employee is entitled to disconnect outside of their normal work hours and enjoy time away from work, unless there is a mutual agreement to do so (i.e. standby, availability for call-ins) or there is an emergency that requires the employee to work.

To encourage and support employees in balancing their working and personal lives, whether working normal hours in a hybrid model, flexible work arrangement, and/or another alternative work arrangement, the Township has implemented this Disconnecting from Work Policy to encourage employees to disconnect from work where possible.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote a sustainable work-life balance and provide guidance to Township employees in ensuring that they practice healthy workplace habits by both fulfilling their hours of work obligations to the Township, their employer; and balancing those obligations with their personal lives by disengaging from the workplace during non-working time. This policy will support a culture of compliance where the Township and employees meet the

requirements of the *Working for Workers Act, 2021* and create an inclusive and diverse workforce where potential barriers to employment or advancement are minimized.

3. Definitions

The following definition should be used when reading this policy:

Disconnecting from work

Means to refrain from performing Township work and 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.

4. Procedures

Employer obligations

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

- 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.
- Able to take applicable meal, rest periods and hours free from work as required by law, contract, Township policies and/or applicable collective agreement language.
- Able to take vacation or other leave entitlements as required by law, contract, Township policies and/or applicable collective agreement language.

Employee obligations

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

- Cooperate fully with any applicable mechanism used by the Township to record working time or update their working status (e.g., out-of-office messages), including when working in a hybrid model, flexible work arrangement, and/or another alternative work arrangement.
- Be mindful of colleagues', customers/clients', vendors' and other third parties' working hours.
- Ensure that they take ownership of their work and meet the Township's operational needs.
- Comply with the Township's Overtime/Time in Lieu for Management and Exempt Employees Policy and/or applicable standby or call back protocols as

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established pursuant to the collective agreement, including any requirements to obtain prior approval before performing overtime work.

Ability to disconnect from work

- 4.03 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 and/or job classification, subject to an employee's employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements pursuant to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* ("ESA").
- 4.04 Nothing in the 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, subject to any rights or entitlements the receiving colleague or employee may have under their employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA.
- 4.05 This policy does not afford employees a "right to disconnect" beyond what is within their individual employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA, which may include rights or entitlements speaking to: normal hours of work and hours free from work, overtime pay, meal and/or rest periods, public holidays and public holiday pay, and vacation.
- 4.06 Where communication is sent outside normal scheduled hours, a statement is encouraged to be included alleviating the expectation of an immediate response.
- 4.07 Meetings should be scheduled with the participants' normal work hours taken into consideration and should be avoided during break and meal periods.
- 4.08 Nothing in this policy is intended to amend or supersede any grievance procedure or other aspect of any applicable collective agreement.

Reporting concerns

- 4.09 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.
- 4.10 Employees are encouraged to report such concerns or issues to their immediate supervisor/manager. If that is not appropriate or the matter cannot be resolved by doing so, employees should direct their concerns or issues to the CAO office - who will work collaboratively with the employee and the employee's supervisor/manager to identify any impediments to disconnecting from work.
- 4.11 Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting or voicing/raising such concerns as outlined above.

Posting, notice and retention

- 4.12 The Township shall provide a copy of this policy to each employee of the Township within 30 calendar days of implementation. If any changes are made to the policy after its implementation, the Township shall provide each employee of the Township a copy of the revised policy within 30 days of the changes being made. A copy of this policy and future revisions will be provided electronically (i.e. posted on the Insider), unless otherwise requested, and communicated via the CAO's bulletin and/or the Corporate e-newsletter.
- 4.13 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. A copy of this policy will be provided electronically, unless otherwise requested.
- 4.14 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, in compliance with the ESA.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Management

5.01 Management is responsible for the following items:

- Respect and encourage the employee's right to disconnect by promoting disconnecting at the end of the workday as part of our Corporate culture and lead by example.
- Be cognizant of when meetings are scheduled and when you are sending emails in consideration of your team members' normal work hours.
- Ensure that each employee is aware of the expectations regarding their normal work hours and have clear goals that, other than in exceptional circumstances, can be met during their normal work hours.
- Encourage open communication in relation to workload, work-life balance and time management.
- Encourage employees to take their entitled breaks/meal breaks and vacation days and disconnect from work during this time.
- Ensure job responsibilities and operational needs are met.

Employees

5.02 Employees are responsible for the following items:

- Communicate your normal work hours and work-related boundaries and be mindful of other's work hours to foster a supportive workplace culture.

- Be conscious of your work habits and manage distractions and non-work-related activities during your normal hours to decrease the likelihood that you will decide not to disconnect after your workday.
- Speak with your supervisor/manager if you are having trouble maintaining work-life balance or are unable to reasonably balance the demands of work and personal life.
- Take entitled breaks/meal breaks and disconnect during non-workdays/hours and on vacation days to prevent burnout and promote well-being.
- Be aware of your well-being and take remedial action if necessary.
- Ensure job responsibilities and operational needs are met.

6. Application

This policy applies to all employees, as defined in the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*. For clarity, “employee” under this policy means those employees of the Township who are considered employees pursuant to the ESA.

7. Related information

- Corporate Policy and Procedures Manual including the following 11 policies:
 - Accountability and Transparency Policy
 - Employee Code of Conduct
 - Healthy Workplace Policy
 - Information Technology Policy
 - Early and Safe Return to Work Policy
 - E-mail Policy
 - Vacation Policy
- Applicable collective agreement
- *Working for Workers Act, 2021*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- Records Retention By-Law

8. Inquiries

For further information regarding this policy, contact your manager/supervisor or the CAO's office.