

Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control  
Administrative Policies and provisions

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Subject: D-0915 - Standards of Conduct/Communications

Section: D-0900 – Personnel Management

Issued: April 2, 2001

Revised:

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### **Policy**

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, in pursuing its mission and consistent with its core values and management principles, expects employees to practice courtesy, respect, tact and consideration in their conduct and communication with fellow workers and the public. It is mandatory that each employee in DNREC show maximum respect to every other person in DNREC and other contacts in a business context so that all enjoy a positive, respectful and productive work environment, free from behavior, actions, or language constituting workplace harassment or intimidation. The purpose of communication should be to help others and to make DNREC run as effectively as possible, thereby gaining the respect of our colleagues and customers.

### **General Provisions**

- A. Employees are defined as any individual working directly or indirectly for the department, i.e., full-time employees, seasonal, or contractual.
- B. Courtesy, friendliness, and a spirit of helpfulness are important and guide the Department's dealings with employees and customers.
- C. Differences of opinion should be handled privately and discreetly. Gossip and backbiting are not acceptable practices for DNREC employees. Discussions about who is dating whom, an individual's personal life choices, their work performance, disciplinary actions, promotions or lack thereof, spreading lies and rumors, intimidating, bullying or humiliating a co-worker is malicious, demoralizing, and demeaning and will not be tolerated.
- D. Constructive criticism – that which will improve business by clarifying or instructing - should be welcomed when delivered with respect and tact. Destructive criticism – that which is designed to harm business or another person - is not to be practiced.
- E. Offensive treatment of an employee, the public or a contractor which creates an intimidating, hostile or abusive work environment is prohibited by this policy.

Offensive treatment may be verbal or physical behavior, which is derogatory, abusive, disparaging, bullying, threatening or disrespectful, even if unrelated to a legally protected status. Such offensive treatment will not be tolerated.

F. Employees should strive to maintain a civil work atmosphere at all times and refrain from shouting, yelling, using vulgarities or swearing at co-workers or customers.

G. The standard of DNREC is a work environment free from disparaging remarks about religion, ethnicity, sexual preferences, appearance and other non-work related matters. Each employee has the responsibility to foster an understanding and tolerance of others' differences in order to create an environment where those differences contribute to a better organization.

H. Because allowing such gossiping to continue is destructive within an organization, and undermines morale, managers will be held accountable for the conduct of their employees and are expected to counsel and define the behavioral expectations for employees who gossip and spread rumors. Should managers let this behavior continue, they will also be held accountable.

Inappropriate remarks or treatment based on any of the following are not tolerated and such behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment: race, religion, ethnic origin, physical attributes, mental or physical disability, color, ancestry, marital status, sexual preferences, medical condition, citizenship and/or age.

Inappropriate remarks or behaviors include those that treat a group of people in a negatively uniform way, assign a behavior in a disparaging way, imply inferiority of a group or an individual, are supposedly funny at someone else's expense, and/or cause embarrassment or distress to others based on comments about a particular group of people or an individual.

It is misconduct for Supervisors or Managers who know or could reasonably have been expected to have known of a violation of this policy to fail to report such behavior, or to fail to take immediate, appropriate, corrective action.

An employee should report any violation of this policy or inappropriate behavior to their immediate supervisor and then to the Human Resources Administrator. Any formal complaint may be filed in accordance with D-0916, Complaint Procedures. This policy prohibits retaliation against employees who bring complaints or assist in providing information relative to a complaint. Any employee found to have engaged in retaliatory action or behavior will be subject to discipline.

Secretary, Nicholas A. DiPasquale  
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and  
Environmental Control

08/15/01  
Date