



## GENERAL POLICY MANUAL

SECTION:	Personnel	APPROVED BY:	County Council
NUMBER:	5.48	SIGNATURE:	Original signed by Michael Duben, CAO
PAGE:	1 of 4	DATE:	June 2, 2022
REFERENCE POLICY:	5.28, 5.30	REVISED:	

### Disconnecting From Work

#### POLICY

Work-related pressure and the inability to disconnect from work can lead to stress and deterioration of mental health and overall well-being. Oxford County understands that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or an employee's work environment or location, employees may feel obligated or choose to continue to perform their job duties outside their normal working hours.

Employee health and well-being are priorities while working and away from work. Oxford County is committed to increasing overall employee health and wellness and providing employees with a better work-life balance. This policy has been established to support employee wellness, minimize excessive sources of stress related to work or workload, and ensure that employees have the ability to disconnect from their work outside their normal work day or hours, while outlining exceptions to disconnecting from work to maintain optimal service delivery.

#### DEFINITIONS

<i>Disconnecting From work</i>	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 performing work.
<i>Normal work day</i>	<p>The typical number of hours an employee is scheduled for in a work day. A normal work day varies by employee, position and/or department.</p> <p>Due to the nature of their position, some employees are afforded flexibility in working hours and location, which may occasionally affect their normal work hours in a day. For example, an employee attends a personal appointment during their regular work day, but subsequently works past their normal end time to account for time spent at the personal appointment. For the purposes of this policy, the employee's normal work day would be considered extended accordingly.</p>

#### PROCEDURE

- 1.0 Employees should disconnect from their work outside of their normal working day without fear of reprisal. Employees are encouraged to set clear boundaries between their work and personal lives.

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## 2.0 Disconnecting from work means that employees:

- 2.1 Can and should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks when they are not expected to work;
- 2.2 Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communication outside their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off;
- 2.3 Are encouraged to utilize their scheduled breaks and time off entitlements for non-work related activities; and
- 2.4 Will not face repercussion or be penalized for not communicating or continuing to work outside of their regular working hours.

## 3.0 Employees must also be respectful of others' right to disconnect and should not expect others to respond, communicate, or complete work outside of their normal work day.

## 4.0 Where employees are required to work outside of their normal work day, they will be entitled to banked lieu time or overtime in accordance with their Collective Agreement or Policy 5.30 Overtime – Non-Union Employees.

## 5.0 Employees who, on a regular basis, cannot manage their workload during their normal work day should meet with their direct supervisor/manager to evaluate their current workload, priorities, and due dates. Managers/supervisors will work with employees to come up with a solution to ensure regular job duties can be completed during their normal work day.

## 6.0 **Communication**

- 6.1 Oxford County maintains "Service Excellence Standards", which outline expectations regarding response times to phone, email and written communication. Employees should recognize that there is no organizational expectation of immediate response outside of their normal work day, and they can disconnect at the end of their normal work day. The standards can be found here - <http://intranet4.oxfordcounty.local/Corporate%20Communication%20Guidelines/Customer%20Service%20Communication%20Guidelines.pdf>

- 6.2 Employees may feel obligated to send or respond to messages when not working. On occasion communication may be sent to employees when they are not working, such as on an employee's day off or scheduled vacation. Employees are not expected to read or respond to any organizational communication when not at work, with the exception of unforeseen

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circumstances, such as an emergency, or in relation to reasons outlined in section 7.0.

- 6.3 It may be necessary to communicate with or forward important information to an employee who is not working. If employees do send communications to others who are not at work, they should not expect a response until the other employee returns. If the matter is urgent or an emergency and requires an immediate response from a colleague, employees must reach out to their manager/supervisor, or other management designate, if their manager/supervisor is also away from work.

## 7.0 Exceptions

- 7.1 Oxford County understands that employees may want or need to work outside their normal work day to meet a time-sensitive deadline, to attend to an urgent or emergency matter, or due to unforeseen circumstances; however, employees are not required to regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work.
- 7.2 Some employees are required to participate in an on-call/standby rotation in accordance with Policy 5.28 or their Collective Agreement. For the purposes of this policy, an employee being compensated to be on stand-by/on-call does not have the right to disconnect from work related to the reasons for being on-call (communication unrelated to being on-call may be addressed during normal working hours).
- 7.3 Work-related communications that employees are expected to respond to outside of normal working hours include those related to shift scheduling, arrangements for off-shift meetings or arranging a return to work if employees have been out of the workplace for a period of time.

## 8.0 Time Away From Work

- 8.1 Oxford County understands the importance for employees to have time off away from work. Employees should use their annual vacation time in accordance with their Collective Agreement, Non-Union Manual, and any other applicable County policy for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits.
- 8.2 At least one week in advance of a scheduled vacation, employees should discuss

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with their supervisor any job duties that need to be completed while the employee is on vacation. Managers/supervisors will work with employees to delegate job-specific duties that must be completed maintain workflow and productivity. Employees should not be reluctant to take vacation due to workload, unless there are limitations or restrictions because of a due date, project priority, scheduling conflict, unforeseen circumstance or other urgent operational need that prevent an employee from taking a vacation at a specific time requested.

## 9.0 **Productivity**

Working additional hours does not always equate to higher productivity. Employees can maximize their productivity during their work day by using time management tactics, such as:

- 9.1 Blocking off periods in their schedule and calendar to complete specific tasks or address communication;
- 9.2 Working with their manager to organize work in order of priority or importance;
- 9.3 Breaking down projects and tasks into manageable chunks;
- 9.4 Setting goals to work continuously for a specified period before taking a break or responding to communication.

- 10.0 If an employee believes they are being subject to reprisal for disconnecting from work in accordance with this policy, they should contact Human Resources.