



NORTHEASTERN FOREST FIRE PROTECTION COMMISSION STANDARDS FOR INTERPERSONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT REVISED 08/03/2012

INTRODUCTION

The Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission (Herein called the Compact) is a governmental entity dedicated to performing its public service duties with the highest standards of interpersonal and ethical conduct. When engaged in any Compact activities, members and cooperating entities have a duty and responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that complies with all laws, enhances the delivery of services, and promotes a positive image of the Compact and its individual members.

PURPOSE

The Compact conducts much of its activities through the use of member staff and cooperating entities. When so engaged, the standards of interpersonal and ethical conduct are governed by the employing member agency or cooperating entity. This policy is intended to clarify the expectations of all individuals engaged in Compact activities and to establish procedures for dealing with substandard interpersonal and ethical conduct when it occurs.

PROCEDURES

When engaged in Compact activities, individuals are expected to adhere to their agency or organization's standards for interpersonal and ethical conduct. Consequently, the employing or sponsoring entity is responsible for receiving, investigating and addressing any allegations of substandard interpersonal and ethical conduct resulting from their staff's involvement in Compact activities.

REPORTING

Allegations of interpersonal or ethical misconduct associated with Compact activities shall be reported to the Compact individual in charge of the activity, to the Executive Director, and to the employing agency or cooperating entity. In all cases, the Executive Director will ensure continuity in the investigation, a proper conclusion to the incident, and implement procedures to help prevent future occurrences.

Misconduct may occur in different degrees of seriousness. Some incidents may readily be resolved on scene or as they are unfolding. For this reason, and for the sake of expediency, the initial allegation of misconduct can be a verbal report to the appropriate individual(s) in charge.

In all cases, the responsible entity will document the allegations, take steps to mitigate the incident as much as feasible, ensure that the incident is investigated, and compile a final report.

All reports, verbal or written, should include as much information as feasible to answer the questions of Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

GUIDELINES

Since each member agency or cooperating entity has its own standards for interpersonal and ethical conduct which will be used to evaluate specific allegations of misconduct, the Compact puts forward these guidelines to help individuals understand and comply with the minimum basic expectations of interpersonal and ethical conduct while engaged in Compact activities. If a Compact member has stricter standards than those described below, then the stricter standards will prevail for personnel from that member's jurisdiction. All legal issues will be dealt with by the employing jurisdiction.

These guidelines form the basis for bringing forward allegations of interpersonal and ethical misconduct.

STANDARDS OF WORK

A. Members of the Compact and Cooperating Entities are expected to:

1. Comply with all local, state, provincial, and federal laws in the process of conducting their business.
2. Conduct themselves in a manner which reflects positively on the Compact.
3. Conduct their work in a conscientious, diligent and efficient manner.
4. Perform their duties with due care and in accordance with Compact standards.
5. Treat members of the public and one another fairly to ensure that the workplace is free from discrimination and harassment.

B. The Compact is expected to:

1. Treat members fairly;
2. Deal in good faith with all members or representatives of the members;
3. Ensure awareness of and compliance with Compact policies in order to provide a safe, non-discriminatory, harassment-free environment for its members and others in the workplace.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, harassment in the workplace includes **personal and sexual harassment and poisoned work environment, personal disrespect, and electronic communications.**

A. Personal Harassment

Personal harassment means any objectionable or offensive behavior that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. It includes objectionable conduct, comment or display made on either a one-time or continuous basis that demeans, belittles, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment.

Without limiting the above, personal harassment includes harassment on the basis of the following prohibited grounds of discrimination: race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, place of origin, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, sexual orientation or gender.

B. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or a series of incidents,

1. That might reasonably be expected to cause offense or humiliation; or
2. That might reasonably be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment, an opportunity for training or promotion, receipt of services or a contract.

Examples of behavior that can constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted touching, patting or leering; sexual assault;
- inquiries or comments about a person's sex life;
- telephone calls with sexual overtones;
- gender-based insults or jokes causing embarrassment or humiliation; repeated unwanted social or sexual invitations; and
- Inappropriate or unwelcome focus/comments on a person's physical attributes or appearance.

C. Poisoned Work Environment

A **poisoned work environment** is characterized by an activity or behavior, not necessarily directed at anyone in particular, that creates a hostile or offensive workplace. Examples of a poisoned work environment include but are not limited to: graffiti, sexual, racial or religious

insults or jokes, abusive treatment of an employee and the display of pornographic or other offensive material.

D. Personal Disrespect:

Is objectionable or offensive behavior that is directed at an individual and is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. It includes objectionable conduct, comment or display made on either a one time or continuous basis that demeans, belittles or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment.

Examples can include:

- * Bullying behavior
- * Rumors or gossip
- * Isolation and exclusion at work
- * Denigration of a co-worker, colleague or person in authority via face to face contact or via another medium, including during computer use or social networking.

E. Electronic Communications:

Interpersonal and ethical misconduct is inappropriate during personal interactions associated with computer and social media activities including the following:

- Inappropriate use of agency computers
- Blogging
- Email
- Voice mail
- Face book
- Twitter
- Instant messaging
- Texting
- Sexting
- Any other form of electronic or digital medium of communication.

The use of social media and its impact is not restricted to the physical workplace.