



# **HIGHWAY 14 REGIONAL WATER SERVICES COMMISSION**

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE HANDBOOK**

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

#### **POLICY: EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

##### **Policy HUM 1.02**

###### **Policy Statement**

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Highway 14 Regional Water Commission provides essential services to residents of member municipalities and non member municipalities. The Commission is obligated to ensure the protection and appropriate use of all its resources and assets.

Trust and mutual respect are the cornerstones of any relationship between the public and its government. All Commission employees are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of behavior and shall perform their duties in a manner that maintains and enhances public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity, and impartiality of the Commission.

The Employee Code of Conduct clarifies the Commission's expectations of its employees, and re-affirms our commitment to caring for our community's needs and maintaining fiscal responsibility on behalf of the public and our employees. It provides a guide for consistent behavior in delivery our service and brings together the principles contained in various Commission documents, policies and plans. Contravention of this Code is a serious matter to the Commission and the public, and will be treated as such.

###### **ELIGIBILITY**

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This Code applies to all Commission Employees



## **PRINCIPLES**

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Commission employees are committed to enhancing quality of life by focusing on services, leadership, and value for money through the following principles:

- Open Communication
- Teamwork and Cooperation
- Mutual Respect
- Integrity
- Innovation
- Fostering Corporate and Personal Wellness

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY**

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Employees of the Commission must follow the highest standard of ethical behavior in the course of their work to ensure that public confidence and trust is maintained. The Commission and all its employees must be above suspicion and beyond reproach, and must be perceived in this manner.

## **DISCLOSURE**

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All employees are required to be knowledgeable about the Code, all related Commission policies, laws, regulations, guidelines, and internal controls applicable to their jobs. As such, each employee is required to address any situations of actual or potential non-compliance by making prompt and full disclosure in writing to their supervisor or the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). This disclosure should include a detailed description of the actual or potential breach. An actual or potential breach may arise without any intentional wrongdoing or improper conduct on the part of the employee. In those circumstances, employees will not be disciplined or treated adversely for making prompt and full disclosure. However, all employees are expected to make every effort to avoid such circumstances. Employees are to use sound judgment and apply the Code in a proactive fashion in order to maintain the public's trust in the Commission's objectivity and integrity. An employee failing to disclose an actual or potential breach of the Code may be subject to discipline.

## **EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR (PROFESSIONALISM)**

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Employees interact with clients in receipt of Commission services, community agencies, contractors, suppliers, and the general public on a daily basis. Employees must be professional, courteous and objective in all of these interactions.

The Commission's employees are its ambassadors and are expected to reflect a professional image at all times. Depending on the nature of the work of the employee, certain attire may not be appropriate. Employees are requested to be mindful of their attire and dress appropriately for their job. Each employee must also be conscious of the Commission's public duty and their part in the discharge of that duty. They are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of ethical behavior and integrity.

As with such external relations, employees must also be professional and courteous with their co-workers. They should be aware that improper behavior in the workplace has a negative effect on others. Examples include excessive noise, inappropriate office decorations, potentially offensive pictures and jokes, profanity, and demonstrating little or no respect for other's personal belongings. Employees are expected to be reasonable and fair in their expectations of each other and resolve any conflict in a mature and professional manner.

## **HARASSMENT**

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Workplace harassment occurs when an employee engages in any demeaning or offensive behavior, verbal or non-verbal, which causes the work environment to be stressful, degrading, or discriminatory for some employees.

The Commission is committed to providing employees with a work environment free from unlawful discrimination or harassment, and promotes an atmosphere that respects the dignity, self-worth, and human rights of every individual. No form of harassment, including either sexual or personal harassment, will be tolerated, whether it involves employees or members of the public.

Each complaint of harassment will be treated as a serious matter. It is the responsibility of all employees to create and maintain a workplace free from harassment. An employee may seek confidential advice or information from their department manager, Alberta Human Rights Commission, or an outside agency.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE** *(refer to the Health and Safety Manual for detailed guidance)*

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Employees must abide by applicable laws and regulations governing the possession or use of alcohol and drugs. The illegal use, sale, purchase, transfer, or possession of any restricted or controlled drug, narcotic or any other substance while on Commission premises, or during working hours, is prohibited and will result in discipline.

It is never permissible for employees to attend to their job duties and responsibilities having consumed alcohol, be under the influence of drugs or other similar substance, which might adversely affect performance on the job.

Employees shall not consume alcohol during a break or lunch period if they operate a Commission owned or leased vehicle or County equipment, or are required to operate their own vehicle as a requirement of their position.

Similarly, the Commission prohibits the sale, purchase, transfer, distribution, and unauthorized possession or consumption of any alcoholic beverages by employees while on Commission premises or while performing their Commission functions.

Employees who may be experiencing problems related to alcohol and drug use will be referred to the appropriate agency for assistance or guidance (e.g. AADAC).

## **USE OF COMMISSION PROPERTY AND ASSETS**

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Employees shall not make unauthorized use, or use outside a sanctioned Commission initiative, any property, assets or other resources of the Commission for any personal reasons. In addition, employees must ensure that any property (including cash, cheques, documents, inventories, and equipment) in their care as part of their job duties is properly secured and protected at all times. This responsibility extends to the use and security of any corporate credit or access code cards.

Employees shall only use the Commission's property for activities associated with the discharge of their duties, unless proper authorization has been granted. Facilities such as internet access, electronic mail, voice mail, internal mail and bulletin boards are provided for Commission business and sponsored activities, and must be restricted accordingly, unless another use is approved by management. For example, employees trying to sell personal items shall not use the Commission's e-mail system or bulletin board to advertise these goods. Similarly, employees using their internet in their jobs are prohibited from performing any unacceptable or unlawful activities on the Commission's electronic network. By way of example, this would include accessing pornographic or hate propaganda websites.

The Commission's electronic networks are corporate assets and employees should be aware that communication over its electronic networks should not be considered private communications.

No employee shall sell, transfer, or in any way authorize the use of any intellectual property, including copyrighted works, patented inventions or processes, and trademarks, belonging to the Commission, without express authority.

The intellectual property rights in any work produced by an employee in the course of employment at the Commission are the exclusive property of the Commission.

The Commission forbids software piracy, defined as using any unlicensed copy of a software package that has not been purchased for Commission purposes. It includes taking a copy of a licensed software package for one's own use or passing a copy on to another person for their use. Computer users must have prior written consent from management before installing any personal software, including feeware, shareware or demonstration software, on a Commission computer.

Upon termination of employment, employees will deliver to the commission all drawings, correspondence, documents and all other property belonging to the Commission, which may be in the employee's possession or control. This includes property made or prepared by the employee and relating in any way to the affairs of the Commission. With permission, employees may retain samples of their work if such work was in the public domain.

## **SECURITY OF COMMISSION INFORMATION**

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It is every employee's responsibility to ensure that all information collected, produced, or obtained in the course of their duties, whether in reports, memos, oral communication or electronic format, is as accurate as possible. No employee shall willfully mislead other employees, Commissioners or the public, about any issue of Commission concern.

Only with proper authority will employees give or release to anyone, confidential information acquired in the course of that person's duties with the Commission.

The following information must not be used or disclosed, except in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP):

- a) Information which is personal
- b) Information that constitutes the proprietary information of a third part, individual or group
- c) Might reasonably be regarded as having been disclosed to the employee in confidence
- d) Is of a sensitive nature
- e) Imparts to the person in possession of such information an advantage not available to the public generally.

Information acquired through employment with the Commission may not be used or disclosed in any personal external activity.

No employee shall benefit, either directly or indirectly, from the use of information acquired during the course of official duties that is not generally available to the public.

## **PROTECTION OF INFORMATION**

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Commission records are available to employees on a "need to know" basis, and the security of such information must be maintained.

All commercial, financial, or technical information belonging to the Commission, supplied to the Commission by a third part, or information that has a monetary value to the Commission, should only be

released where to do so would be in the best interest of the Commission and in compliance with the relevant legislation.

Personal information controlled by the Commission must be used or disclosed in compliance with FOIP. The FOIP Act allows employees to use personal information if they require that information to carry out their duties, and if the affected individual reasonably expects that their personal information would be used this way. When an employee proposes to disclose someone's personal information, the written consent of the affected individual is generally required. The FOIP Coordinator should be consulted when it is not possible to obtain the individual's consent or for any details concerning consent requirements.

Employees must protect the following information regarding the Commission and others from illegal, unauthorized, or inadvertent use and disclosure:

- a) Client records
- b) Pending proposals or contract
- c) Estimates prior to tender openings
- d) Research results
- e) Financial data and projections
- f) Proposed acquisitions and divestitures
- g) Computer programs and software
- h) Professional expertise
- i) Inventions

These guidelines extend beyond an employee's current relationship with the Commission. For example, employees should not divulge to the Commission any confidential information obtained from their former employer. Similarly, when an employee leaves the employment of the Commission, they are not to disclose information that could be detrimental to the Commission, individual or firm owning the information.

## **MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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Communications with the media and public will be conducted so that all information originates from an authoritative source within the Commission. The official spokespersons for the Commission include the Chief Administrative Officer or Department Heads.

It is not the intent of this Code to restrict the ability of employees to express a personal opinion on matter of general interest. In such cases, the employee must make it clear that the comment is being made in their capacity as a private citizen, and not as a representative of the Commission.

Similarly, the employee must use caution to ensure that the Commission's interests are not compromised in any way, either by the use of Commission letterhead, e-mail addresses, or by any other implication.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

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A conflict of interest occurs when, in the course of an employee's duties, the employee is called upon to deal with a matter in which the employee has a direct or indirect personal and/or financial interest. A direct interest can occur when an employee may derive, or be seen to derive, some financial or personal benefit or avoid financial or personal loss. An indirect interest may arise when the potential benefit or loss would be experienced by another person or corporation having a relationship with the employee. These benefits, losses, interest and relationships are generally financial in nature but are not limited to such. In other words, a conflict arises when an employee participates in activities, which could advance a personal interest at the expense of the Commission's interest. Any behavior, which is, or could be perceived as, a conflict is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.



## **FRAUD/THEFT**

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In general, fraud is an act committed which, through deceit, falsehood or other such behavior, either deprives the Commission of its assets, property or other resources (this includes theft), or causes the Commission to act to its own detriment or prejudice.

Fraud may include acts committed with the intent to deceive, involving either misappropriation of Commission assets, property or other resources or misrepresentations of financial or other information to conceal such misappropriation, by such means as:

- a) Manipulation, falsification or alteration of records or documents
- b) Suppression of information transactions or documents
- c) Recording of transactions without substance
- d) Misapplication of accounting principles

All employees shall work in accordance with both the Commission controls established to prevent fraudulent misconduct and all applicable laws, regulations and government guidelines. All employees shall exercise honesty, integrity, objectivity and diligence and shall not knowingly be a party to any fraudulent activity, including theft. Each employee is encouraged to report, in writing, any knowledge or suspicion of fraud to their manager, Department Head or CAO.

All supervisors are responsible for ensuring that adequate internal controls are in place to prevent and detect fraud. Management is accountable for monitoring employee activity and performance and ensuring all employees are aware of, and in compliance with, controls, policies and procedures.

For purposes of this policy, fraud shall include the misrepresentation of hours worked and/or accounted for on timesheets and/or leave-of-absence forms.

All confirmed incidents of fraud or theft committed against the Commission will be viewed as acts of criminal activity and will be treated accordingly.

## **STAFF/COMMISSIONER RELATIONS**

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Employees must recognize the distinct roles of the commissioners within the organization. Simply stated, the Board of Directors are responsible for developing policy and staff is responsible for its implementation. A significant yet somewhat less-defined function of staff is the role of advisors to the Board of Directors. Because of the significance of this advisory function, it is important that staff avoid creating disparity by dealing with the Board of Directors in an inequitable manner.

Without restricting the scope of this rule, the following shall be considered breaches of the Code of Conduct:

- a) Employees shall deal with the Board of Directors in an objective and impartial manner at all times in the execution of their duties as an employee (See Subsection d below).
- b) Employees must recognize that the Board of Directors are responsible for the establishment of policy and the employees are responsible for implementation of the directives originating from the Board of Directors and conduct themselves accordingly.
- c) Good teamwork is based on "no surprises". Employees, when requested to provide information to the Board of Directors, should endeavor to provide that same information to all members of the Board of Directors. Similarly, if an employee has a concern with any aspect of the operations or their employment, that employee should never direct their concerns to a member of the Board of Directors, but instead to the supervisor, or the CAO.
- d) Employees have the authority to refer a member of the Board of Directors to their manager if they are made to feel uncomfortable with any request for information, opinion or assistance by, or on behalf of, the Director.

## **VIOLATION OF CODE OF CONDUCT**

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Every employee is expected to be aware of, and act in compliance with this Code and its related policies. Violation of these principles is a serious matter and will be dealt with as such by the Commission. Any employee, who has contravened these requirements, including the "reporting allegations" obligation to report any knowledge of wrongdoing, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

## **REPORTING ALLEGATIONS**

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In addition to the self-disclosure obligation, any suspected fraud, breach of trust, or other wrongdoing by another employee must be reported to his/her supervisor, Department Head, or the CAO. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of such information.

All employees must co-operate fully during an investigation of suspected wrongdoing in relation to any activities outlined in this Codes. Retaliation against someone who is a witness or is involved in such investigations is prohibited.

When in doubt about the interpretation or application of this Code, clarification should be sought from a supervisor, Department Head, or the CAO.

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

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As part of effective management, each supervisor must ensure that its employees are aware of, and act in compliance with, this Code and its related policies.

The management of the Commission is accountable for protecting the assets of, and the public trust in, the Commission. Toward this end, management must make every effort to establish and maintain adequate systems, procedures, and controls to prevent and detect fraud, theft, breach of trust, conflict of interest, bias, and any other form of wrongdoing.

Upon receiving written disclosure of an actual or potential breach of the Code, the supervisor or CAO shall either determine that no breach exists or take reasonable steps to ensure that the matter is addressed in the appropriate manner.

DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL MOTION #

**13-15**

  
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CHAIRPERSON

  
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DATE