



Title:
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY

Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 1 of 4	Policy Number: 06.70.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 10/28/2014	Last Revised Date: 06/13/2018

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (*the "District"*) is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for employees and the public. Workplace violence is the second leading cause of work-related death in the United States. The District is committed to responding with ***"Zero Tolerance"*** to incidents of violence and threats of violence in our workplace. All employees have a right to a workplace that is free of violence and threats of violence. The goal of this policy is to prevent and address violent acts in the District workplace so as to reduce the risk of harm to employees and others.

PURPOSE:

This policy is intended to provide guidelines for preventing, reporting and investigating incidents of violence in the workplace, as well as formulating appropriate remedial action. It is not intended to substitute or discourage reporting of incidents of workplace violence to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Nothing in this policy is intended to nor shall be construed to create any private cause of action against the District or any of its employees, nor shall it be construed to create any contractual or other rights or expectations. However, nothing herein is intended to affect any existing civil or other remedy which may be available to any person arising out of an incident of violence in the workplace.

Allegations of violence committed by or against sworn police officers and security personnel in the course of their official duties are not covered by this policy and shall be referred to the appropriate authorities.

However, this policy covers such employees insofar as violence may result from interaction with co-workers, or fall outside the scope of their duties.

AFFECTED AREAS:

The District policy on workplace violence applies to all District employees. Employees who violate this policy may be subject to legal action as appropriate. Violation of this policy by an employee shall lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with the applicable law, rule or collective bargaining agreement.

DEFINITIONS:

Workplace Violence: Workplace violence, as used in this policy, includes but is not limited to, written, electronic, or verbal communications, whether direct or indirect, which are of a threatening, improper, intimidating, and/or coercive nature; the use or threat of real or imminent physical force, stalking; vandalism, damage, or destruction of property; and the use or possession of any weapon and/or ammunition, unless the specific weapon, ammunition, or use is authorized by the District for a particular work assignment, and used as authorized.

PROCEDURE/PROCESS:**1) General Instructions:**

- a. **Contact 911** as quickly as possible and if practical to do so. (*ALWAYS remember to tell 911 to dispatch Forest Preserve police.*)
- b. Remain calm.
- c. Keep as far away from the hostile individual(s) as possible.
- d. Limit hostile individual(s) access by locking office doors to prevent entry, if possible.
- e. Save any evidence of threats (*voicemail, texts, email messages, notes, etc.*) and report the evidence to law enforcement.

2) Gunfire or Weapon Observed: If gunfire is heard or a person(s) is seen brandishing a weapon in your workplace, seek refuge in an area that can be locked from the inside (*if possible*) or quickly barricaded to prevent entry.

- a. Choose a room without windows or stay out of sight from room windows.
- b. Hide quietly and remain hidden in the room. Take no action to intervene unless discovered or necessary to save your life.
- c. Silence all electronic devices (*cell phones, pagers, etc.*).

3) Explosion/Bomb: If an explosion occurs or a suspected explosive package/device is found, immediately leave the building using the nearest exit.

- a. Alert others in the workplace, if possible and/or prudent, before leaving.
- b. Do not disturb, move or touch the suspect package or device!
- c. After leaving the building, **contact 911**, provide as much detail about the package as possible, and stay on the line!

4) Hostage Situation: If a hostage situation occurs, exit the building or area unless it will place you in greater danger. Take no action to intervene unless it is necessary to save your life.**5) Duty to Report:**

- a. In the event that workplace violence results in injuries requiring immediate medical attention, appropriate emergency services shall immediately be contacted as well as building security.
- b. If a District employee becomes involved with or witness any workplace violence incident that employee must immediately inform District Law Enforcement.
- c. If a District employee, other than the involved parties, becomes aware of an incident, that employee shall report said incident to District Law Enforcement.
- d. Supervisors informed of any alleged workplace violence incident shall immediately inform the District Law Enforcement.
- e. All employees shall cooperate with District leadership, law enforcement, fire, medical and other emergency personnel.

6) Investigations:

- a. The Law Enforcement Department shall promptly investigate each report of an incident of workplace violence.
- b. The Law Enforcement Department shall inform the Human Resources Department, and the Legal Department of, all **(1)** workplace violence incidents, and **(2)** any subsequent investigation findings.
- c. Employees and other witnesses shall be questioned concerning incidents of workplace violence.
- d. Law Enforcement authorities must always be contacted whenever a possible violation of criminal law is discovered during an investigation.

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e. An investigative report shall then be prepared and forwarded to the Human Resources Department and the Legal Department.

7) **Non-Retaliation:**

- a. Retaliation against any employee who makes a **good faith** complaint or report of workplace violence or participates in or aids in the investigation of a complaint under this policy is prohibited.
- b. Any person who believes that he or she has been subject to such retaliation shall bring it to the attention of the appropriate Department Head and/or the Departments of Human Resources or Legal.

8) **False or Frivolous complaints:**

- a. False or frivolous charges refer to situations in which the accuser is consciously making a false accusation pertaining to a workplace violence issue. It does not refer to charges made in good faith which ultimately cannot be proven.
- b. Given the seriousness of the consequences for the accused, a false or frivolous charge is a severe offense that is cause for disciplinary action.

9) **Confidentiality:**

- a. Consistent with the necessity of prevention of workplace violence, the privacy of the reporting employee and the investigation of violence in the workplace, all reports and investigations of workplace violence will be kept confidential to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
- b. The reports and investigations of workplace violence are not subject to public disclosure except as may be necessary for disciplinary action or as otherwise required by law.

RESPONSIBILITY:

- 1) **Department Heads/Supervisors:** Department Heads and supervisors shall be responsible for: **(1)** assisting in implementing and maintaining safe workplace practices; **(2)** the implementation of this policy; **(3)** communicating this policy to the employees under their direction; **(4)** the receipt of and reporting of all incidents of violence and orders of protection reported by employees in their departments; and, **(5)** engaging proactive actions and strategies to ensure the safety of their employees during layoffs and/or employment terminations to prevent workplace violence.
- 2) **District Employees:** District employees shall be responsible for: **(1)** cooperating with investigations; **(2)** immediately reporting incidents of violence in the workplace or any potentially dangerous situation as described in this policy; and, **(3)** adhering to this policy.
- 3) **Human Resources Department:** shall be responsible for: **(1)** assisting in the training of District employees on this policy; **(2)** assisting in investigations when or where appropriate and/or necessary; and, **(3)** preparing recommendations for appropriate remedial action.
- 4) **Law Enforcement Department:** shall be responsible for: **(1)** the implementation of this policy; **(2)** responding to all emergency events occurring on District properties, to assist with the delivery of emergency services, conduct investigations, and make timely notifications to senior police management and other appropriate District managers; and, **(3)** informing the Human Resources Department, and the Legal Department, of any reported workplace violence incidents, and the status of subsequent investigation findings.
- 5) **Legal Department:** shall be responsible for: **(1)** assisting in investigations when or where appropriate and/or necessary; and, **(2)** preparing recommendations for appropriate remedial action.

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TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) All District employees should be trained on this policy.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

- 1) This policy should be distributed to all District employees.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.
- 3) Department Heads should work to ensure that their supervisors are knowledgeable about this policy.

REFERENCES:

Cook County Personnel Rules
Rule 8: Conduct and Discipline of Personnel

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Workplace Violence Policy

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Employee Handbook Rules of Conduct

POLICY LEAD: Michelle Gage
Director of Human Resources

APPROVAL: Arnold Randall
General Superintendent

POLICY HISTORY:

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Revised: 04/06/2016 **Revised:** 06/13/2018

If you have questions concerning this District policy, please contact:

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The Human Resources Department
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