

SKAGIT 911 PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: **Workplace Bullying**

POLICY NUMBER: 2.4

EFFECTIVE: **March 7, 2006**

1.0 **PURPOSE**

To provide a policy that provides Skagit 911 personnel a work place free from bullying or intimidation by anyone employed by or contracted by Skagit 911.

2.0 **POLICY**

All employees are responsible for creating a safe working environment free from bullying. They are to respect the rights of their co-workers and any others they may have interaction with at all times. All incidences of bullying will be investigated and dealt with promptly, thoroughly and fairly.

3.0 **PROCEDURE**

Skagit 911 will take an affirmative role in preventing workplace bullying. Should an instance of inappropriate behavior occur, it is the employee's responsibility to bring concerns to the attention of supervisory personnel.

4.0 **DEFINITION**

4.1 Bullying is persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, insulting behaviors and / or abuse of power which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence and may cause them to suffer undue stress. Bullying is often a form of abuse and aggression expressed psychologically, but can also be physical.

4.2 Bullying, harassment and discrimination definitions vary and there is much overlap. The essential difference is that acts of harassment or discrimination usually center on unwanted, offensive and intrusive behavior with a sexual, racial, or physical component and is directed at a protected class such as race, color, age, national origin, etc. Refer to Policies 2.2 and 2.3. Bullying is a direct systematic attempt either by means of physical or psychological behavior to undermine an employee's sense of value.

4.3 Workplace bullying can be conducted by one or more persons against another or others in their place of work and / or in the course of employment. An isolated incident of behavior may be an affront to dignity at work but as a one time incident is not necessarily considered to be bullying.

4.4 Workplace bullying undermines organizational performance by resulting in poor morale, higher absenteeism, reduced productivity and higher turnover of staff and can seriously harm working conditions.

5.0 BEHAVIORS

The following examples of workplace bullying towards others or ones self are not exhaustive or prescriptive. Such behaviors may include:

5.1 Verbal

- 5.1.1 Verbal abuse, insults and name calling;
- 5.1.2 Shouting and aggressive behavior
- 5.1.3 Condescending or sarcastic tone;
- 5.1.4 Using a person as a constant butt of jokes;
- 5.1.5 Derogatory or offensive nicknames;
- 5.1.6 Sneering or public humiliation;
- 5.1.7 Slandering or maligning by the manipulation of a person's reputation by gossip, rumor or ridicule;
- 5.1.8 Persistent unwarranted criticism.

5.2 Non-Verbal

- 5.2.1 Social exclusion, isolation, ostracism or non cooperation;
- 5.2.2 Showing hostility through sustained unfriendly contact or exclusion;
- 5.2.3 Unfair delegation of duties;
- 5.2.4 Taking credit for someone else's work;
- 5.2.5 Excessive supervision and over-checking of a person's work outside of normal supervisory responsibilities;
- 5.2.6 Offensive gestures;
- 5.2.7 Staring or aggressive facial expressions;
- 5.2.8 Ignores or fails to acknowledge an interaction appropriately.

5.3 Physical

- 5.3.1 Horse play;
- 5.3.2 Unwanted physical contact;
- 5.3.3 Aggressive physical contact or assault ;
- 5.3.4 Intimidating body language

5.4 What Workplace Bullying is Not

- 5.4.1** Constructive and fair criticism of an employee's conduct or work performance is not workplace bullying. Poor work performance, behaviors or conduct will be dealt with through the operation of fair procedures and work plans.
- 5.4.2** Legitimate management responses to pressured situations that require direct or immediate action that can arise from staff shortages and/or consequent increased workload or high stress situations is not workplace bullying.

6.0 REPORTING WORKPLACE BULLYING

- 6.1** Any employee who feels they are being targeted or subjected to intimidation or bullying tactics should first try to make it clear to the alleged bully that their behavior is unwanted. A victim of bullying should keep a record of such a request and document the alleged bully's response and also notify their supervisor of the incident(s) of alleged bullying.
 - 6.1.1** If an alleged victim feels unable to confront the person or feels that the incident(s) is of a serious nature they should use the Chain of Command to report the bullying.
- 6.2** When supervisory personnel are notified of the alleged bullying, he / she will promptly initiate an investigation of the complaint and complete the following:
 - 6.2.1** Notify the Chain of Command
 - 6.2.2** Contact the alleged bully and advise of the pending complaint and the described behavior/s. Without judgment and pending the outcome of an investigation, advise the alleged bully that if the described behavior is or has occurred, it must be stopped immediately.
 - 6.2.3** The allegation will be documented as a written statement either by the complainant or the receiving party and shall include:
 - 6.2.3.1** The name of the alleged bully;
 - 6.2.3.2** The facts surrounding the behavior or incident;
 - 6.2.3.3** Dates and / or time frame of the behavior or incident;
 - 6.2.3.4** Witnesses;
 - 6.2.3.5** The complainant's signature.
- 6.3** The investigation may include separate interviews with both the complainant and alleged bully and anyone identified as a witness to the behavior or who may be

similarly situated with the complainant, and who may be able to testify to their experiences with the alleged bully.

6.4 All parties involved shall fully and promptly cooperate in the investigation. All parties will be given the opportunity to state their case. Every effort will be made to safeguard confidentiality during the investigation.

6.4.1 Any documents containing the complaint, discussion and interview notes / memos / emails / tapes / discs, etc. pertaining to the investigation process and any other documents pertinent to the complaint will be confidential to the extent consistent with law. No investigative documents will be placed in the personnel file unless and until conclusive findings of the investigation are made. If a disciplinary action results, the detail of that action will be kept in the employees personnel file.

6.5 A complainant's rights are protected under this policy and he / she will not be further victimized for making a complaint in good faith. If however; it was found that the complaint was brought maliciously; it will be treated as misconduct under established disciplinary procedures.

7.0 RETALIATION

No employee will suffer retaliation for reporting such allegations or concerns. If retaliation is substantiated, the retaliating employee will be disciplined up to and including termination. Retaliation of any kind against an employee who has made a complaint of bullying is prohibited and shall be regarded as a separate and distinct cause for complaint and subject to disciplinary action. Refer to Policy 2.8 Retaliation.

8.0 DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Allegations and cases of bullying will be dealt with promptly. The Shift Supervisor, Assistant Director, or Director will take every complaint or inquiry of bullying seriously. Upon learning of such allegations or concerns, the Assistant Director and Director are to be notified immediately.

8.1 If an investigation shows the accused employee did engage in bullying, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, as in the case of any other serious employee misconduct. Such actions may include warnings, verbal and/or written reprimands, a letter to the employee's file, an employee transfer, demotion, suspension or termination.

9.0 RIGHTS OF THE ALLEGED BULLY

An individual is not at fault until proven so by the evidence. As an alleged bully, the employee has the right to an objective and fair investigation of the facts.

Should the facts show that the employee is not at fault, they will be treated with all due respect for their position and reputation.

Director Signature

Approved by Emergency Management Council

Date