

# POLICY No. 7.110: DISCONNECTING FROM WORK

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## Policy

The Metis Nation of Ontario understands that employees may feel obligated or choose to continue to perform their job duties outside their normal working hours. The purpose of this Disconnecting from Work Policy (“**Policy**”) is to encourage disconnecting from work and to support all of our employees prioritize their own well-being.

This Policy applies to all employees (including People Leaders), volunteers, interns, regardless of position, tenure and work location.

## Disconnecting from Work

Disconnecting from work is defined as 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 the performance of work.

Employees are not expected to engage in work-related communications, including those from clients, colleagues, People Leaders, community communications, outside of the employee’s regular working hours.

Employees are encouraged to stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks when their regularly scheduled hours end. Working hours are set in an employee’s letter of offer upon hire, or communicated upon changes to their role. Flexible hours are considered a part of established working hours. This includes working approved alternative hours outside of standard established hours to ensure specific work duties are met.

As staff within the organization work to different schedules, all employees may disconnect from work in the context of their own particular work pattern.

## Exceptions

Occasionally, employees may need to work outside of their regularly scheduled working hours in certain circumstances, which include:

- to meet a time-sensitive deadline;
- to attend to an urgent matter (as defined by the employee’s Branch/Program guidelines);

- emergency involving the workplace (such as technological or mechanical malfunctions, security breaches, injury, etc.);
- scheduled “on-call” periods; or
- due to unforeseen circumstances.

However, employees are not expected to regularly or frequently work outside of their regularly scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work. Please see *Policy 4.030: Overtime and Time in Lieu* for more information.

Any work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or other messages sent and/or received after working hours are considered not urgent unless marked otherwise. This may be done by marking an e-mail as high importance, writing ‘Urgent’ (or similar in the subject line), or any other clear way of communicating that such a communication should be responded to immediately if possible.

Certain routine, non-urgent, mass emails with appropriate subject lines, such as General Information/not urgent, may be sent by after hours to avoid overrunning in-trays during working hours. Employees should not feel the need to respond to communications received outside normal working hours.

System testing of emails/texts/emergency communication systems may also occur after hours. This may also include automated notifications of completed online applications, or other automated systems which the MNO cannot control delivery of notifications.

Employees may disconnect from work-related tasks and/or communication outside of working hours without fear of reprisal.

## Commitment and Responsibilities

### *People Leaders*

It is the responsibility of all directors, managers, supervisors and team leaders to:

1. know the regular working hours of each employee, and communicate any changes in scheduling to employees in as timely a manner as possible;
2. set clear and reasonable expectations with respect to workload and deliverables;
3. set clear and reasonable expectations with respect to when work and engaging in work-related communications outside of regular working hours may be required as a normal part of the employee’s job;
4. ensure that employees are taking all statutory meal breaks, vacation, and other rest periods as may be required by law;

5. ensure that other employees are complying with the Policy *vis à vis* their co-workers; and
6. not engage in reprisal if an employee exercises their rights under this Policy.

### Employees

It is expected that all employees are to:

1. Clearly communicate their regularly scheduled hours in voice mail messages, e-mail signature blocks and out-of-office auto replies, with clearly outlined expectations for their response time.

- a. Sample Out of Office response for e-mail and voicemail:

- i. Hello,

Absence Alert.

Thank you for reaching [NAME], [POSITION] at the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). At this time, I am out of office and unable to respond to your communication.

[INSERT IF HOLIDAY CLOSURE] The MNO is closed for services [INSERT DATES AND TIMES] due to [HOLIDAY]. MNO services will resume [DATE]

Please note MNO business hours are Monday through Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm. [INSERT IF DIFFERENT] My hours are [INSERT HERE].

Please contact [NAME], [POSITION] if you require assistance prior to my return. They will respond within normal MNO business hours.

Otherwise, I will respond to any communications once I return [DATE].

[NAME]

2. Manage their time and work efficiently in order to ensure that their deliverables are met within their regular working hours unless an exceptional circumstance arises in which case this should be communicated immediately to the employee's direct People Leader.
  - Any urgent communications should be clearly marked as such in the text, e-mail subject line, voicemail, or other communication medium. People Leaders may respond if available, otherwise employees will receive support during the next business day.

3. Utilize delayed delivery e-mail, and avoid work-related communication to other employees via phone, text, social media, or other messaging apps outside of regularly scheduled hours.
4. Avoid responding to work-related communication outside of regularly scheduled hours, subject to exceptions, including those outlined above.
5. Work with their People Leader to assign job-specific duties that must be completed while the employee is on paid or unpaid time off, to maintain service standards.
6. Cooperate fully with any appropriate mechanism utilised by the organization to record working time, including when working remotely, and accurately record their hours.

## Enforcement

If an employee has any concerns regarding this Policy or with respect to disconnecting from work, they should first discuss this concern with their People Leader. If they cannot resolve the concern, the employee may raise their concern to the Branch Director, and if still no resolution, to Human Resources. Human Resources is not an appeal mechanism or decision-maker here, but will support the People Leaders involved in resolving the addressing the concern.

Employees who do not comply with this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action.