



FALL RIVER RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

GENERAL POLICY No. 614 SUBJECT: WORK STANDARDS AND PERSONAL CONDUCT

I. **PURPOSE:**

Standards of business and personal conduct are important to the success of the Cooperative and each employee. Enforcement of these standards will not only contribute to the continued economic viability of the Cooperative but also will help make the Cooperative a better and safer place to work.

II. **POLICY:**

- A. All employees are expected to abide by applicable Federal and State laws and regulations in the performance of their job duties, as well as other commonly accepted standards of business and personal conduct. These standards include honesty, integrity, and mutual respect for fellow employees, supervisors, managers, and customers. Employees are also expected to observe and comply with all policies and performance standards that may be established by the Cooperative.
- B. Violation of these standards may result in discipline up to and including termination, depending on the circumstances involved. It would be impractical and perhaps even impossible to list all possible instances of potential work-related misconduct or performance issues. However, listed below are several examples or benchmarks of the kinds of misconduct or performance problems that may result in discipline. These examples are intended as further guidance to managers, supervisors, and employees regarding the Cooperative's general standards and expectations described above.
 - 1. Dishonesty in any form, including falsification of records or reports or providing misleading information.

2. Theft or unauthorized possession of property belonging to the Cooperative, other employees, or customers.
3. Damage, loss, or destruction of Cooperative property or property belonging to customers or other employees due to willful, reckless, careless, or negligent acts.
4. Unauthorized use or misuse of Cooperative time, material, equipment, property, or confidential information.
5. Being under the influence of, possessing, or using alcohol or other intoxicants or illegal substances while on duty.
6. Insubordination, failure to perform assigned work, or neglect of duties.
7. Poor performance, failure to meet job requirements, inefficient or inadequate completion of assigned duties, sleeping or loafing on the job.
8. Failure to observe safety rules and regulations.
9. Unexcused or excessive absenteeism or tardiness.
10. Failure to work courteously and harmoniously with other employees, customers, and others doing business with the Cooperative.
11. Fighting, horseplay, or other disorderly conduct that may endanger the well-being of other employees, customers, or the operation of the Cooperative.
12. Threatening, harassing, intimidating, or coercing others; using profane, obscene, or abusive language; or interfering with the duties or performance of others.
13. Other conduct that could adversely affect the job performance, effectiveness, or safety of the employee or others; or the Cooperative's effectiveness, interests, or regard in our industry or service area.

These examples are not all inclusive and do not reflect all possible circumstances that may result in discipline. Specific questions about the application of this policy to any particular situation should be directed to your manager.

C. Failure to observe Cooperative policies, rules, and standards, may result in disciplinary action including counseling, warnings, suspension, or termination depending on the circumstances involved.

1. The Cooperative's discipline policy is intended to help employees identify and correct work-related problems and deficiencies, not to be punitive. The Cooperative normally will initially warn employees for **minor** infractions with limited risks of harm to personnel, property, or other interests of the Cooperative before taking more severe disciplinary action.

Serious misconduct with actual or potential risk of **significant** damage or harm to employees, property, or other Cooperative interests may result in severe disciplinary action or termination without prior warnings.

2. The Cooperative will endeavor to fairly and objectively evaluate the relevant facts and evidence prior to assessing disciplinary action. Where appropriate, the Cooperative will conduct a formal investigation and/or hearing to adequately evaluate the relevant facts. Employees ordinarily will be given an opportunity to explain or defend their actions prior to any disciplinary action.
3. However, there may be circumstances where immediate suspension from work may be appropriate, pending further investigation of the facts. Such cases may involve serious employee misconduct, or where risks or personal injury or property damage are present, or where necessary to adequately gather and investigate the facts.

D. Guidance regarding the Cooperative's disciplinary process:

All instances of possible disciplinary action will be handled on an individual basis, considering the nature of the offense, the actual and/or potential (reasonably foreseeable) harm or damage involved, and the employee's prior work record.

1. **Counseling.** In most cases of minor misconduct or poor performance, the Supervisor will initially discuss the inappropriate behavior or performance problem with the employee. The counseling is intended to make sure the employee understands what is expected, including any applicable rules or standards. The employee will be expected to agree to make necessary improvements or corrections. The counseling will be documented in writing in the employee's file and the employee will receive a copy.
2. **Warning.** If the problem persists or if other problems develop, the supervisor will ordinarily talk with the employee again about their deficiencies and issue a written disciplinary warning to the employee.

The warning will describe the problem, specify the improvement or correction that is expected, establish a time period for improvement (if appropriate), and advise the employee that more serious discipline will occur if the problem is not corrected. The employee will be given a copy of the written warning and a copy of the warning will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

3. **Final Warning/Suspension.** If the employee's misconduct or performance problems are not corrected, the next step ordinarily would be a frank discussion between the supervisor and employee and a final warning advising the employee in writing that if the problems are not corrected, they may be terminated.

In cases where serious misconduct may be involved, the Cooperative may suspend an employee at this step without pay, generally for up to five (5) days depending on the circumstances.

The suspension is intended to (1) Give the employee time to consider whether to voluntarily leave employment with the Cooperative or to agree to perform their job duties in compliance with the expectations and standards of the Cooperative, and (2) Give management time to review all the facts and consider possible courses of action regarding continued employment of the suspended employee.

4. **Termination.** When the Cooperative's efforts to correct the employee's deficiencies have failed or in cases of serious misconduct, the employee will be terminated.

IMPORTANT: Management may modify or skip any of the above disciplinary steps considering the seriousness of the infraction, or any mitigating or aggravating circumstances, or the employee's past work record.

- E. This policy is not intended, nor should it be implied to create an employment contract or a guarantee of employment. Employment with the Cooperative is voluntary and may be terminated by the employee or the Cooperative at any time for any lawful reason.

III. **PROVISIONS:**

- A. Supervisors are expected to review all work performance or misconduct problems within their areas of responsibility with their Department Manager.
- B. Department Managers are responsible to review all disciplinary matters involving chronic performance problems or serious misconduct, including recommendations for appropriate action, with the CEO/General Manager. Final authority regarding the discharge of any employee rests with the CEO/General Manager after review of all the pertinent facts and recommendations from appropriate Department Managers and Supervisors.

1. Any employee who believes the disciplinary action taken is unjust under this policy may have the matter reviewed by submitting a written request for reconsideration with their Department Manager within one week of written notification of the disciplinary action. Such requests for reconsideration should include the basis for the request, including any evidence the employee may have to support the request.
2. The Department Manager will review all pertinent and available evidence and any recommendations from the employee's supervisor. The Department Manager will prepare their own written recommendation and submit it to the CEO/General Manager together with all relevant supporting information and statements.
3. After reviewing the Department Manager's recommendations, the CEO/General Manager at their discretion may:
 - a. Schedule a hearing with the employee, their Supervisor, their Department Manager, and any witnesses whose testimony can amplify or clarify the circumstances of the case.
 - b. Decide against reconsideration.
4. The CEO/General Manager will issue a letter outlining their findings and decision regarding the appeal. The CEO/General Manager's decision shall constitute the final action of the Cooperative, and will be transmitted in writing to the employee, the employee's Supervisor, and all other personnel involved. A copy will be placed in the employee's file.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY:

The CEO/General Manager is responsible for seeing that the provisions of this policy are carried out.

V. **PRIMACY OF POLICY**

This policy supersedes any existing policy that may be in conflict with the provisions of this policy. This policy does not represent a contract between the employer and employee, and the employer herein may change the policies alone and without notice.

APPROVED BY THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER



Bryan Case, CEO/General Manager

DATE APPROVED: June 20, 2002

DATE REVISED: February 20, 2017

November 18, 2019

October 31, 2023