



Section of Policy Manual: Personnel	Policy No. : PER-15
Subject: Disconnecting from Work	Policy Approval Date: June 13, 2024 Date First Approved: June 9, 2022
Year of next review: May 2026	Last Review/Revision Date: April 2024

1. POLICY STATEMENT:

The Gravenhurst Public Library Board values the health and well-being of employees. Disconnecting from work at appropriate times is vital for a person’s well-being and sustaining a healthy work-life balance. Disconnecting at appropriate times also enables employees to work more productively during their actual working hours and reduces the likelihood of employee burnout.

2. PURPOSE:

Policy PER-15 Disconnecting from Work supports each employee in disconnecting from work outside of their normal working hours, subject to reasonable exceptions.

This Policy will be governed by and interpreted in accordance with all applicable legislation, including (but not limited to) Ontario’s *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (the “*ESA*”) and *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate the GPL Board’s support for employees to disconnect from work when appropriate to assist in achieving a healthy work-life balance, regardless of whether employees are working in the workplace, remotely or in a flexible working arrangement.

3. POLICY & GUIDELINES:

a. Disconnecting from Work

“Disconnecting from work” under this Policy means not engaging in work or work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or sending or reviewing other messages such that employees are free from working outside of their normal working hours in accordance with the *ESA* and this Policy, including the exceptions detailed below.



b. Employer, Management and Employee Obligations

The GPL Board wishes to ensure that everyone is able to disconnect from work outside of normal working hours in accordance with this Policy.

- i. CEO/ Chief Librarian (Board's representative) or designate obligations:
 - To provide new employees with a copy of this Policy within 30 days of the employee's start date
 - To review and amend this Policy as often as may be required
 - To provide existing employees with a copy of any amended versions of the Policy within 30 days of the amendment
 - To provide employees with information regarding their normal hours of work given the nature of their work and any other information required to assist employees with complying with this Policy
 - To take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees can disconnect from the workplace at appropriate times as detailed in this Policy
 - To try to resolve any employee concerns about this Policy
 - To advise employees of the limited instances in which they may be expected to perform work outside of their normal hours of work; and
 - To refrain from penalising or taking any other reprisal action against employees who have questions regarding this Policy or request compliance with it. Legitimate management direction and/or corrective action towards employees is not considered "reprisal action."
- ii. Employee Obligations
 - Take all reasonable steps to ensure that they effectively manage their work and work-related communications during their normal working hours
 - To fully cooperate with any time recording methods which the CEO/ Chief Librarian or designate uses to track hours of work
 - To take all reasonable steps to ensure that their colleagues can disconnect from work in accordance with this Policy; and
 - To notify the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate if they feel undue pressure to work or respond to work-related communications outside of their normal working hours, or if they are otherwise unable to comply with this Policy.



c. Working Hours

While employee working hours will vary at the Library, each employee's hours of work are defined by past practice, their employment contract and/or by agreement with the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate.

If you have any questions regarding your normal hours of work, please consult with the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate.

It is generally expected that all employees can complete their work, including reviewing and responding to any work-related communications, during their normal hours of work. The GPL Board has no expectation that employees engage in work or work-related communications outside of their normal hours of work, subject to the exceptions detailed below.

Breaks are provided in accordance with employment standards and are intended to provide employees with time to recharge and enable them to resume their regular work productively. Employees should take any scheduled breaks during their shift. Employees should take time away from their work and refrain from responding or sending communication during breaks.

If you are regularly unable to complete your work or attend to work-related communications within your normal hours of work, please notify the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate.

d. Exceptions

There are situations when it is necessary for employees to perform work or communicate with colleagues outside of their normal hours of work, including, but not limited to the following:

- Where an emergency or important circumstances arise, with or without notice
- To assist or fill in at short notice for a colleague
- Where the nature of the employee's duties requires work and/or work-related communications outside of their normal hours of work
- Unforeseeable business or operational reasons



- An employee's request or agreement to work certain hours or have flexible working hours; and
- Other unusual circumstances as your manager may advise or which are inherent to your position.

e. Meetings, Calls, and Work-Related Communications

Employees should make all reasonable efforts to book meetings and calls during the attendees' normal hours of work, subject to the exceptions detailed above.

Similarly, employees should only review and send work-related communications during their normal working hours, subject to the exceptions detailed above.

Work-related communications should not be sent to or from employees' personal mobile phones, personal e-mail addresses, personal telephone numbers or other personal devices, subject to the exceptions detailed above or an agreement to communicate in this manner.

Some employees' hours of work may vary at the Library. As a result, certain employees may attend to work-related communications outside of other employees' normal hours of work. Where this is the case, the sender should consider the timing of their communications and understand that the recipient will not be expected to respond until their return to work at the earliest. The sender should also consider all appropriate safeguards on other employees' normal hours of work, including but not limited to the following:

- Using the "Delay Delivery" function for e-mail messages in Microsoft Outlook so that their message is sent during regular working hours.

f. Automatic Replies and Voice Mail

Employees are required to activate an automatic e-mail response and change their voice mail message whenever taking vacation or a leave from work to reflect their absence. Automatic responses and voice mail messages should advise the sender that the recipient is absent from work. The response/voice mail message should include the start and end date of the recipient's absence and provide an alternative contact's information. The automatic



response/voice mail message should be active for the duration of the employee's absence from work.

g. Handheld and Remote Work Devices

The GPL Board may provide some employees with handheld devices, such as a mobile phone, laptop, tablet, or other device to assist with working remotely. These devices are provided to employees to encourage flexibility in completing their work and in case of emergency situations. Employees are not expected to make themselves available for work or work-related communications outside of their normal working hours, however, there are situations when it is necessary for employees to perform work or communicate with colleagues outside of their normal hours of work as noted in the **Exceptions** section above.

h. Questions and Concerns

Employees should consult with the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate if they have any questions or concerns about this Policy.

i. Employee Acknowledgement

I have read Policy PER-15 Disconnecting from Work set forth above. I understand its contents, agree to abide by it and acknowledge that the Policy forms part of my contract of employment. I also agree to seek clarification from the CEO/Chief Librarian regarding any aspect of the Policy on which I am unclear.

Employee Name:			
Employee Signature:		Date:	

j. Suggestions

There are actions employees can take to advise others of their status – a few are listed below:



- **Activate an automatic e-mail response at the end of their normal working day:** If applicable, this automatic response should advise the sender of the recipient's normal hours of work and any other relevant information.
- **Including a line in their e-mail signature:** Employees could include a line in their e-mail signature that says "*I am sending you this email now because it is convenient for me. I do not expect you to respond to it outside of your normal hours of work.*"
- **Using the "Delay Delivery" function** for e-mail messages in Microsoft Outlook so that their message is sent during regular working hours.
- **Use the auto-reply function when away from the office:** When away from the office, autoreply should be used to notify senders that you are away and who to contact if it is urgent.
- **Changing your voice mail message when out of the office.** Advise callers that you are away, when you are returning and who to contact if the call is urgent.

Related Documents:

Ontario's *Employment Standards Act*, 2000
Occupational Health and Safety Act
Bill 27 *Working for Workers Act*, 2021