
Town of High Level Policy 251-17

Title:	WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT POLICY
Authority:	Council
Resolution:	263-21
Related Policies:	165-97, 218-07
Date Adopted:	July 5, 2021
Rescinds:	185-01, All previous revisions of 251-17
Revision:	3.0
Status:	In Effect

Definitions

Any words or phrases with specific definitions listed below are identified throughout the policy by being formatted as bold and italic text.

Employee: An individual employed by the *Town* including, for the purposes of the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan*, all elected officials, volunteers, temporary and contract employees, service providers, supervisors, managers, officers, and directors.

Employees: Collective of *Employee*.

Unfounded: Determined through investigation that the offence did not occur, nor was it attempted and therefore no violations of the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan* took place.

Harassment: Any single incident or repeated incidents of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying, or action by a person which that person knows or ought reasonably to know will or would cause offence or humiliation to an *Employee*, or adversely affect the *Employee*'s health and safety, and includes a sexual solicitation or advance, as well as conduct, comment, bullying, or action because of race, religious beliefs, colour, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or any protected area or grounds under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.

Harassment does not include any reasonable conduct, in accordance with established policies, procedure, or directives, of a representative of the *Town*, director, manager, or supervisor regarding the management of *Employees* or a worksite.

Town: Town of High Level, including elected officials, supervisors, managers, directors, and designated officers acting on behalf of the Town of High Level.

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Violence: The threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm, and includes domestic or sexual violence, whether at a worksite or work-related.

Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan:

This policy, any supporting directives, procedures, forms, or other appendices, and general, facility or job specific hazard assessment.

Intent

The purpose of this policy is to ensure, having completed an organizational risk assessment, that:

1. **Employees** are aware of, and understand that, acts of violence and harassment are considered a serious offense for which necessary sanction will be imposed, and that a policy and procedures are in place to deal with the same.
2. **Employees** subjected to acts of violence and harassment are encouraged to access any assistance they may require to make or pursue a complaint.
3. **Employees** are advised of available recourse if they have been subjected to, or become aware of, situations involving violence and harassment.
4. Action will be taken in response to complaints, and where complaints are substantiated, appropriate corrective and disciplinary action will be taken.
5. Victims of violence and harassment will be supported, and the effectiveness of the **Town's** actions evaluated.
6. This policy applies to all activities where any **Employees** are involved in work-related activities, regardless of the location.
7. The **Town** operates this policy on a “Zero Tolerance” basis and any act of violence and harassment will be considered serious in nature by the **Town** and appropriate investigation and action will be taken.

Policy Statement

The **Town** believes in the prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace and promotes a violence and harassment-free workplace. Any act of violence or harassment committed by or against any **Employee** or member of the public is unacceptable and such conduct will not be tolerated. The **Town** believes that all **Employees** have the right to work in an environment free from violence or harassment. This policy is in keeping with the **Town's** dedication to providing and maintaining an environment that fosters respectful and responsible behaviours.

The **Town** is committed to:

1. Educating our **Employees** in the recognition of violence and harassment and operation of

- this policy and supporting directives and procedures in this regard.
2. Investigating reported incidents of violence and harassment in an objective and timely manner.
 3. Taking necessary action in response to such reported incidents; and
 4. Providing appropriate support for victims.

Application

The **Town** believes that by working together with **Employees**, the risk of workplace violence and harassment can be minimized.

The **Town** strictly prohibits physical or verbal threats, intimidation, bullying, harassment, or physical violence in the workplace.

Weapons are strictly prohibited from all **Town** facilities and premises except for **Employees** who have been specifically trained and authorized to be in possession of weapons required for the performance of their duties; violators are subject to discipline and may be reported directly to the police.

Town of High Level will train and educate all **Employees** on violence and harassment and ensure that they are clear about the **Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan**. In addition, a copy of the **Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan** will be made available to all employees.

This policy has been developed in consultation with the Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee and applies to all **Employees**.

All **Employees** are responsible for adhering to the **Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan** and should try to prevent and eliminate violence or harassment in the workplace.

Employees should advise a member of management if they witness any violence, harassment, or potential issues threatening the health and safety of employees.

For the purposes of the **Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan**, **Violence** or **Harassment** can occur:

1. At the workplace.
2. At employment-related social functions.
3. In the course of work assignments outside the workplace.
4. During work-related travel.
5. Over the telephone if the conversation is work-related; or
6. Elsewhere, if an incident takes place when an **Employee** is there because of work-related responsibilities or a work-related relationship.

This policy does not preclude **Employees** from filing a complaint under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, and is not meant to discourage, prevent, or preclude **Employees** from exercising legal rights under any other law.

It is important to remember it is the perception of the receiver of the potentially offensive message that determines whether something is acceptable or not, whether it is spoken, a gesture, a picture, or

some other form of unwelcome or objectionable communication.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

All *Employees* are personally accountable and responsible for complying with this policy and the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan*.

Employees must not cause or participate in violence or harassment, must make every effort to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in the work environment, and must intervene immediately by advising a member of management if they observe a problem or if a problem is reported to them.

Any *Employee* who is directly affected by or a witness to any incident of violence or harassment in the workplace should report the incident immediately to a member of management.

It is imperative for the safety of all *Employees* that any incidents or potentially violent situations be reported without delay. Silence can be, and often is, interpreted as acceptance.

Alternate reporting mechanisms will be made available to *Employees* in case the designated recipient of a harassment complaint is the alleged harasser.

Any *Employee* who is a victim of or at potential risk of domestic violence should advise Human Resources if they think that the aggressor may attempt to contact them at work. The *Town* will take all reasonable precautions to protect the *Employee* from domestic violence that has followed them into the workplace.

Any *Employee* who is the victim of violence or harassment can and should, in all confidence and without fear of reprisal, personally report the occurrence to a member of management. *Employees* will not be demoted, dismissed, disciplined, or denied a promotion, advancement, or employment opportunity because they lodged a complaint when they honestly believed they were the subject of actual, attempted, or threatened violence or harassment in the workplace.

False, *Unfounded*, frivolous, or fraudulent allegations of violence and harassment may cause both the alleged harasser and the *Town* significant damage.

If the *Town* determines that any *Employee* has knowingly made false, *Unfounded*, frivolous, or fraudulent allegations of workplace violence or harassment, immediate disciplinary action will be taken and may include immediate dismissal without further notice.

Management

The *Town*, including all supervisors, managers, directors, and designated officers will:

1. Uphold their responsibility for creating and maintaining a violence- and harassment-free workplace and ensure the health and safety of all *Employees* or anyone else who may be affected by the risk of violence while at the worksite.
2. Ensure that no *Employee* is subjected to or participates in violence or harassment at the worksite.

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3. Enforce this policy and the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan* and ensure its application in the day-to-day operations of the *Town* by its *Employees*.
4. Ensure that *Employees* are aware of their rights and duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Code*, and their regulations; and
5. Be sensitive to the climate in the workplace and address potential problems before those problems become serious.

When an *Employee* has asked a supervisor, manager, director, or officer to deal with a violent incident, the supervisor, manager, director, or officer must:

1. Support the *Employee* without prejudice.
2. Work with the *Employee* and document the offensive action in accordance with the requirements of the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan*.
3. Contact Human Resources or the Chief Administrative Officer and provide details of the incident on behalf of the *Employee*.

If a manager becomes aware of violence or harassment in the workplace and chooses to ignore it, that manager and the *Town* risk being named co-respondents in a complaint and may be found liable in legal proceedings brought about by the complainant.

The *Town* will investigate all incidents of violence or harassment and take corrective actions to address the incident and prevent it from reoccurring.

The *Town* will prepare a report that outlines the circumstances of the incident and retain this record for the length of time detailed in the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan*, or the length of time required under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Code*, and their regulations, whichever is longer. In addition, the *Town* will ensure that the report is available upon request to an occupational health and safety officer.

Chief Administrative Officer

The Chief Administrative Officer will:

1. Cause supporting directives, procedures, forms, or other appendices, and general, facility or job specific hazard assessments as required to be developed, reviewed, and revised as needed to support and implement this policy.
2. Ensure that this policy and any supporting directives, procedures, forms, or other appendices, and general, facility or job specific hazard assessments be compiled into to the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan*.
3. Enforce the requirements of this policy and any supporting directives, procedures, forms, or other appendices and general, facility or job specific hazard assessments.

Confidentiality

The *Town* will do everything it can to protect the privacy of the individuals involved and to ensure that complainants and respondents are treated fairly and respectfully. Neither the name of the person reporting the facts nor the circumstances surrounding them will be disclosed to anyone whatsoever unless such disclosure is necessary for an investigation or disciplinary action. The

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Town will protect this privacy so long as doing so remains consistent with the enforcement of this policy and adherence to the law.

All circumstances related to an incident of violence or harassment, or the names of the complainant, the person alleged to have committed the violence, any witnesses, and subsequent investigations are considered confidential and are strictly prohibited from being disclosed to anyone except to the extent required by law or where disclosure of the minimal amount of personal information is necessary to inform **Employees** of a threat of violence or potential violence.

In some circumstances, information may be disclosed where necessary to investigate incidents, take corrective action, or to inform parties involved in the incident of the results of the investigation and any corrective action to be taken to address an incident of violence.

Where criminal proceedings are forthcoming, the **Town** will assist police agencies, lawyers, insurance companies, and courts to the fullest extent.

Training and Education

The **Town** will ensure that **Employees** are trained on the details of this policy, with an emphasis on the proper reporting procedure for **Employees** who believe they have been a victim of violence or harassment in the workplace. **Employees** will be given the opportunity to ask specific questions regarding this policy and will be retrained as necessary during their employment with the **Town**.

The **Town** will ensure that all **Employees** are trained and educated on violence and harassment in the workplace and that they are clear about the roles and responsibilities, as well as this policy and procedures. The training will cover, at minimum, the following topics:

1. How to recognize workplace violence and harassment.
2. The policy, procedures, and workplace arrangements that effectively minimize or eliminate workplace violence and harassment.
3. The appropriate response to workplace violence and harassment, including how to obtain assistance.
4. Procedures for reporting, investigating, and documenting incidents of workplace violence and harassment; and
5. The **Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan**, including work safety procedures and control measures to prevent or reduce the risk of violence while on the job.

A copy of this policy will be made available to all **Employees**.

Review

This policy, the **Workplace Violence and Harassment Plan**, and associated directives, procedures, forms, and other appendices will be reviewed in consultation with Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee and updated, if necessary, when:

1. An incident of violence or harassment occurs.
2. Upon recommendation from the Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee; or
3. At very least every three years; and
4. Whenever there is a change of circumstances that may affect the health and safety of

employees.

Assistance & Interpretation Contact Information

Human Resources

Office: (780) 821-4005

Email: hrm@highlevel.ca

Health & Safety

Office: (780) 821-4007

Email: safety@highlevel.ca

Cell phone contact details may be listed in the staff directory.

Revision History

<i>Rev. No.</i>	<i>Date (YYYY/MM/DD)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
1.0	2001/08/20	Original 185-01 Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace	Rescinded
2.0	2017/03/27	251-17 Workplace Violence / Harassment / Abuse / Sexual Abuse Harassment Policy	Revised
2.1	2021/06/28	251-17 Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy	Draft for Management Review
2.2	2021/06/30	251-17 Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy	Draft for JWHSC Committee Review
2.3	2021/06/30	251-17 Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy	Draft for Council Review and Adoption
3.0	2021/07/05	251-17 Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy	Adopted by Council Resolution 263-21 – In Effect