Right to Disconnect Policy

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all employees are aware of their own and others right to disconnect from work and to not routinely work outside of their own normal working hours.

**Policy**

The health and wellbeing of our employees is of the utmost importance to us and we encourage and support our employees to prioritise their own wellbeing.

Disconnecting from work is vital for your wellbeing, and to help you achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. The organisation recognises that every employee is entitled to switch off outside of their normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed, unless there is an emergency or agreement to do so, for example while ‘on call’.

To encourage and support our employees in balancing their working and personal lives whether they work traditional hours in the workplace, work remotely or flexibly we have adopted a ‘Right to Disconnect’ company policy, which includes best practice guidance around wellbeing, working hours, the use of technology and more.

The nature of our business means that we offer flexibility to our employees and expect the same in return. Legitimate reasons will arise when it is necessary for the Company or an employee to contact somebody outside of their normal working hours. Some examples of this are;

* to respond to a customer query
* as a result of differing work patterns
* to check availability for work
* to request for somebody to fill in at short notice
* in an emergency situation
* in unforeseeable circumstances
* other business or operational reasons
* if working across differing time zones

**Wellbeing**

Employees working from home are encouraged to schedule post-work leisure activity, in order to create some separation from the end of their workday and the beginning of their personal time. Staff, including those engaging in flexible working arrangements or remote working are reminded to switch off from work, to monitor their working hours and to take breaks in accordance with the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 (OWTA 1997), away from work devices. Staff must take reasonable care of their health and safety in accordance with section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (SHWWA 2005)

**Company Obligations**

We must all respect each other’s right to disconnect and meet our obligations under the relevant employment legislation.

The Company’s Obligations

COMPANY supports each employee’s right to disconnect outside of their normal working hours.

COMPANY does not expect any employee to routinely work outside of their normal working hours.

COMPANY recognises that employees are entitled to switch off from work without being disturbed unless there is an agreement to do so or an emergency.

COMPANY provides detailed information to each person regarding their working time and normal working hours through their contracts of employment, rosters and in writing following any agreed changes.

COMPANY ensures that all employees are aware of and take their required rest breaks.

COMPANY ensures a safe workplace and continuously reviews its obligations and policies regarding Health and Safety.

COMPANY will never penalise an employee for acting in compliance with any duty or right under Health and Safety Legislation.

**Employee Obligations**

* All employees must take responsibility to manage their own working time whether they are on site or off-site.
* All employees must monitor their own working hours and take the required breaks.
* All employees must follow the Company Clocking system/timesheets procedure and policy.
* All employees must notify their manager, in writing, if they are unable to avail of any statutory rest break, the date on which this occurred and the reason.
* All employees must take reasonable care for their own health and safety at work and the health and safety of their colleagues.
* All employees must be mindful of other people’s right to disconnect including colleagues, managers, customers and suppliers.
* All employees must be conscious of their own working pattern and work-related wellbeing and take remedial action if necessary, including seeking support from their manager.
* Any employee who is unclear about what their normal working hours are can speak with their manager who can clarify this.

**Working across differing time zones**

The Company recognises that working across differing time zones or international travel of our employees or people that they interact with during the course of business can result in employees connecting at different times outside of their normal working hours. The Company expects recipients of communications outside of their normal working hours from International Colleagues, Suppliers and Customers to respond within their own normal working hours.

**Communication**

It is recognised that employees, customers and suppliers may maintain differing normal working hours or patterns and that it will occur that an employee may contact somebody outside of that persons normal working hours during the course of their own normal working hours where the two differ.

If any employee needs to communicate by email with somebody outside of that person’s normal working hours they should consider the following where relevant;

* Use of an email header to state that it is not an urgent email
* Use of an email footer to state that an answer is not expected outside of that person’s normal working hours
* Use of the delay send option in the email

Where possible, email should only be sent or checked during a person’s own normal working hours.

Employees should put on an out of office auto response when they finish work at the end of their shift.

Emergency communications must only be sent when there is an actual emergency.

Telephone/Text Communications should state that the text or call is not urgent unless it actually is.

No employee is required to respond to social communications from colleagues outside of their own normal working hours.

We respect people’s time by only inviting them to meetings where they play an active role and have something to contribute. Employees should be mindful of and manage how much virtual communication they have each day.

**Raising Concerns**

COMPANY is committed to supporting all of our employees and managers in their right to disconnect.

Any employee who has a concern regarding the interpretation or implementation of this policy, (e.g. their right to disconnect is not being respected or that they are unable to disconnect), should, in the first instance, raise the concern with the person informally.

Alternatively, they should seek support from their manager or another colleague to raise the concern.

If these methods are not successful then the employee should use the Company Grievance Procedure which is detailed in the staff handbook.

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