

# Section E - Policies

Section E-1: Alcohol Directive in Bromfield .....2

Section E-2: Attendance Standards / Working Hours .....3

Section E-3: Communication (Hardware / Software).....6

*E-3a: Computers, Internet, E-Mail, Online Services.....6*

*E-3b: Telephone Usage & Telephone Credit Card Policy.....9*

Section E-4: Education .....15

*E-4a: Continuing Education Release Time Policy .....15*

*E-4b: Student Internship Program.....16*

*E-4c: Training Policy .....17*

*E-4d: Tuition Reimbursement .....18*

Section E-5: Interview / Employment Policy .....20

*E-5a: Interview Procedure.....20*

*E-5b: Exit Interview .....21*

*E-5c: Employment References .....22*

*E-5d: Resignations / Transfers .....24*

Section E-6: Legislative Initiatives & Contacts.....25

Section E-7: Media Contact .....26

Section E-8: Performance Evaluations .....27

Section E-9: Personal Mail .....29

Section E-10: Personnel Files Policy.....30

Section E-11: Smoking Policy .....31

Section E-12: Use of Leave Time for Voluntary Donations .....34

Section E-13: Use of Leave Time to Extend Date of Separation .....35

Section E-14: Weather Emergency .....36

**DIRECTIVE**

As a result of our move to ODA's new headquarters, the number of requests by agricultural, agency, and outside groups for use of our facilities for meetings and other events has increased tremendously. Several groups have requested permission to serve alcoholic beverages in our facilities.

I have evaluated this situation and requested an opinion from our Legal staff. Based upon the potential liability, and in order to protect and extend the useful life of our newly completed structures, it is my decision that serving alcoholic beverages on ODA premises, by any group, shall be prohibited.

Therefore, I direct that no group, agency, or other organization, individually or collectively, shall be permitted to serve alcoholic beverages at any event held on ODA premises.

Exceptions to this policy may be granted at the sole direction of the Director, for OHIO PROUD events, or events using OHIO PROUD products.

Fred L. Dailey,  
Director

## **WORK HOURS**

Forty (40) hours shall be the standard work week for all full-time permanent Ohio Department of Agriculture employees. The official operating hours for ODA employees headquartered at 8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068 is 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM unless designated differently on the job description or approved flex schedule.

Field staff work schedules shall vary by division and will be determined by divisional work rules. Hours and work schedules may be established by industry.

Flexible starting and ending times for those employees whose hours normally remain constant may be approved pursuant to the Ohio Department of Agriculture Flexitime Policy.

Telephone coverage must be provided in all departmental reception areas from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

All employees are expected to be at their work station, ready to work at their designated starting time, and are expected to work an eight (8) hour day Monday thru Friday, unless overtime has been authorized by the appropriate division chief and/or Deputy Director or the employee has an approved flex schedule.

## **BREAK PERIODS AND LUNCH BREAKS**

Lunch periods shall be not less than one half hour nor more than one hour in length near the midpoint of the day.

Bargaining unit and classified employees are entitled to two (2) fifteen minute breaks; one in the morning and the other in the afternoon at times to be established by the supervisor. Breaks cannot be used to extend leave time or to shorten the work day.

Employees on break are still on State time and they are accountable for their actions during the break period.

It is not permissible to forego one break and combine it with another break or the lunch hour in order to create a longer break or longer lunch hour.

Employees shall not loiter at the work stations of other employees that are not on break or lunch during their break or lunch periods.

Employees (except overtime exempt employees) are not permitted to eat meals at their work stations. Conference rooms, break rooms and/or cafeterias should be used for this purpose. Drinks or small food items such as candy, gum, etc. are permissible at desk areas for all **office** employees.

Employees are to eat lunch during their lunch period, and not at their desks before or after a full lunch period is taken.

**TARDINESS**

To maintain the efficient productivity of each Ohio Department of Agriculture office, employees must arrive promptly and be at their work stations at the beginning of their scheduled start time. Repeated or excessive tardiness shall be reflected on the employee's performance evaluation and may result in progressive disciplines in accordance with the Departmental Disciplinary Grid.

Employees over five (5) minutes late are subject to a dock in pay. Mitigating circumstances will be taken into account.

Tardiness returning from lunch and break periods may be subject to progressive discipline, as indicated above.

**DRESS POLICY**

This policy applies to all employees of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, including temporary workers and contract staff.

It is the policy of the Ohio Department of Agriculture that employees present a professional and dignified image in order to instill confidence and to establish respect from the public and our customers. Employees are expected to wear proper business attire at all times while in the office, in the field and in other settings when they are representing the Department. Clothing should fit in such a manner so as not to present a safety hazard.

All employees who are in contact with the general public shall be neat and appropriately dressed.

What is appropriate varies among the divisions in which the employees are assigned. Some divisions may require uniforms, lab coats, coveralls, or shirts and ties.

**CALL-IN PROCEDURE FOR SICK LEAVE**

When unable to report to work, all employees must call the office no later than 8:30 AM (exception – employees working in establishments regulated by other entities or in establishments which determine, as third parties, ODA employee's working hours). When staffing requires advance notice, employees are required to phone in ninety (90) minutes prior to the beginning of their shift.

The employee him/herself must make the call.

The call shall be directed to the employee's immediate supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable, a message must be left with the designated employee within the respective division. Designation will be made by the division chief and employees will be notified of

such person. In field divisions, where answering devices are currently being used, notification procedures will continue as currently practiced.

If unforeseen emergency circumstances, beyond the employee's control, prevent the employee from complying with the rule, the supervisor will consider the mitigating circumstances, and may not subject the employee to disciplinary action. However, the employee will notify the supervisor, or designee, as soon as possible. Evidence of the emergency preventing the employee from calling in on time may be required.

### **EMPLOYEE ABSENCES FROM WORK AREA**

It is the employee's responsibility to notify his/her immediate supervisor when leaving their respective work area.

Employees must request permission from their immediate supervisor before leaving the work area to conduct union business, as well as to conduct union business within their work area. Employees must also advise their supervisor as to the approximate time needed to conduct the union business.

This time shall also be recorded in accordance with Article 3.11 of the OCSEA – State of Ohio Collective Bargaining Agreement.

### **SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT**

All employees, including those working 8-5 schedules, will be required to sign in and out when they arrive and depart for the day and for lunch. A supervisor must work the same shift to ensure accurate report-in and report-off times. This can be arranged with other division personnel within a respective laboratory building.

Management reserves the right to revise these rules, or to establish new ones. The union will be informed of any revisions before they take effect.

Divisions may establish/modify these rules and establish the same or equivalent rules for exempt employees. However, the rules may not be more stringent than the above.

## COMPUTER, INTERNET, E-MAIL AND ONLINE SERVICES

**Security, confidentiality and the safeguarding of Ohio Department of Agriculture and other State Agencies Computer assets is a matter for concern of employees of the Department who have access to computerized files of the Ohio Department of Agriculture and other State agencies. Each person in the Department holds a position of trust relative to this information and recognizes the responsibilities entrusted to them in preserving the security and confidentiality of this information, and safeguarding State assets. The employee's conduct either on or off the job may threaten the security or confidentiality of this information.**

This policy replaces and supersedes any previous policy and guideline regarding the use of the Internet, E-mail or other online services.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

The purpose of this policy is to clearly identify the responsibilities for the use of the Internet, electronic mail and all other online services. Use of the Internet, electronic mail, and online services has great potential to enhance the productivity of state employees in all agencies. At the same time, each person in the Department using these services recognizes the need to be prudent in the use of the services. Employees are prohibited from using State computer hardware and software for any purpose other than State business. Further, employees are prohibited from circulating their E-Mail and Internet addresses as locations where they can be reached for personal business. **Since all computer hardware and software within the Department is the property of the State, the Department reserves the right to monitor use without the employee's knowledge or consent.** The following addresses some, though not necessarily all of the responsibilities inherent in ODA employees' use of the Internet, electronic mail and other online services.

1. Equipment and services provided by ODA are intended to be used for business purposes only. Uses that interfere with business use, involve solicitation, are associated with for-profit activities, or could be embarrassing to the employee or the agency, are prohibited.
2. ODA employees shall not use the equipment or services for personal gain, for personal business functions, to send chain letters, or for soliciting funds for religious, political or any other purpose, not specifically authorized by the Director or his designee.
3. ODA employees shall not use the equipment or services to disseminate any type of communication which is harassing or discriminatory based upon the race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious preference or political beliefs of another person or group.

4. ODA employees shall not use the equipment or services to disseminate any type of communication in order to incite violence, describe or promote the use of weapons, explosives, other destructive devices or describe or promote terrorist activities.
5. ODA employees shall not use the equipment or services to solicit or disseminate sexually oriented messages or images.
6. ODA employees shall not use the equipment or services to solicit or disseminate or print copyrighted materials, in any medium, in violation of applicable copyright laws.
7. ODA employees shall not use the equipment or services to provide access to or distribution of confidential information. Any disclosure of public information shall be in accordance with existing ODA policy on Requests for Public information.
8. ODA employees shall not use any password, log-on code or online or e-mail account, other than their own.
9. ODA employees shall take all reasonable precautions to prevent the inadvertent or unauthorized dissemination of any ODA information via the equipment or services specified in this policy.
10. No personal software, nor ANY software not provided by ODA is to be installed on any computer provided by ODA to any employee. However, software approved and installed by the ODA Office of Information Technology to accomplish specific ODA responsibilities is permissible (i.e. FDA, USDA, USEPA, etc.).
11. No connection to any Internet service provider except as specifically installed by the ODA Office of Information Technology is permitted. Field staff with dial-up capabilities to the ODA network **MUST STRICTLY ADHERE TO THIS RESTRICTION!**
12. Until web-based e-mail is available, field lap top computers must use only the ODA issued computer to access the ODA network and e-mail system. **DO NOT USE ANY OTHER COMPUTER TO DIAL INTO THE ODA NETWORK!**
13. All equipment, whether hardware, software, or otherwise, supplied by ODA to its employees, is for authorized use only. All equipment is the property of the State of Ohio and both the equipment and its contents are subject to inspection as authorized by the Director or his designee.
14. All communication via ODA supplied equipment or services, whether by internet, e-mail, or otherwise, is public and no employee shall have either a right or expectation of privacy as to its contents.
15. No employee shall attach to any equipment, any device, including personal or other cell phones, that enables connection to the internet or wireless transmission of data or

voice without first notifying the Department Office of Information Technology and securing permission, in writing, to use said device.

### **FEDERAL COPYRIGHT LAW**

Please be advised that any duplication of licensed software, except for backup purposes, is a violation of the federal copyright law. Department software may not be duplicated for use on any other personal computer. Any employee found copying software for any purpose other than “back-up”, is subject to disciplinary action. Similarly, any employee providing Department software to outside parties is also subject to administrative discipline.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) holds licenses for the use of its computer software from a variety of outside companies. The ODA does not own the code to this software and, under licensing agreements, does not have the right, through its employees or otherwise, to reproduce this software or any of its related media or documentation. Employees shall not reproduce any software licensed or used by the ODA in any manner whatsoever. Employees shall not install or reinstall such software without the express knowledge and consent of the Data Processing Chief or his authorized representative. Employee shall not remove any disks, CD Roms, or other media containing such software from my place of work for installation and use elsewhere.

ODA employees shall use all employment-related software only in accordance with appropriate licensing agreements. Employees shall agree not to install software licensed for single use on multiple computers or on network serves for distribution/and or use by others.

ODA employees shall not install and/or maintain on any ODA computer used for any purpose whatsoever software which is not appropriately licensed and demonstrably intended to be used for job-related purposes. The employee agrees that prior to installing any appropriately licensed software intended to be used for business purposes on any ODA computer, will obtain permission for such installation from the Data Processing Chief or the Chief’s designated representative.

ODA employees shall use ODA computers, and all software installed upon those computers, for job-related purposes only. Employees agree to not use ODA computers and software for personal purposes, including but not limited to personal business, family matters, personal correspondence, religious purposes, or business connected with any activity outside of their scope of employment.

ODA employees who violate this or any other agency computer policy will be subject to appropriate discipline. In addition, the employee understands that under U.S. Copyright law, illegal reproduction of computer software may be subject to civil damages of \$50,000 as well as criminal penalties, including fines and imprisonment.

## **TELEPHONE POLICY TELEPHONE CREDIT CARD POLICY**

### **GENERAL**

The Department of Agriculture provides telephones for its employees to use for the purpose of conducting the Department's official business. These telephones are the property of the State of Ohio. Abuse of these telephones is strictly prohibited. Employees are encouraged and expected to use the Department's telephones in performing their job duties. Unless otherwise instructed by the Director or his designee, the switchboard at the Department should be in service no later than 8:00 a.m. remain and remain so until 5:00 p.m., on normal workdays.

### **BUSINESS CALLS**

The Department has provided telephones for business calls. However, the Department does recognize that it may not be possible to make business calls solely from telephones located at the Department's offices. Realizing this, the following calls will be considered business calls, and therefore, may be charged to the Department, or reimbursed to the employee:

1. Any telephone call made for the Department's official business, including calls made to or from the Department's offices;
2. Telephone calls to an employee's headquarters to retrieve business messages;
3. Telephone calls to the employee's home when the employee has been required to work overtime (one call not to exceed ten (10) minutes);
4. Telephone calls to the employee's home to retrieve messages, each night the employee is required to stay away overnight on business (one call not to exceed five (5) minutes).
5. Telephone calls from an employee to his or her supervisor requesting sick leave or other emergency leave.

### **PERSONAL CALLS**

The Department recognizes that it may be necessary for an employee to make or accept a limited number of personal calls while at work. Employees are entitled to reasonable, limited use of the Department's telephones for local personal calls. The frequency and duration of personal calls must be kept to a minimum. Except for emergency calls, personal telephone calls should be limited to breaks and lunch periods. Division chiefs and other supervisors may require the taking of messages for non-emergency personal calls, so employees may return the calls during breaks or lunch.

Personal enterprise, which involves any activity undertaken for profit or gain of any kind, shall not be conducted from the Department's telephones. Department employees are

prohibited from circulating their Department telephone numbers as a number at which they can be reached for personal enterprise. **Personal business cards and other personal business materials shall not contain or identify a Department telephone number as the contact number.**

An excessive number of personal calls made and/or received by a Department employee shall constitute telephone abuse and may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the ODA Disciplinary Grid. It shall be the burden and responsibility of the employee to justify, to the satisfaction of the Director of Agriculture, the need for the number or personal calls made and/or received. To reduce time spent on personal calls, the division chiefs and other supervisors may require that personal calls be recorded on a message slip, allowing employees to return calls on breaks or during lunch.

### **LONG DISTANCE CALLS**

Except in the case of emergency, personal long distance calls shall not be made from the Department's telephones and charged to the Department. Personal long distance calls must either be charged to a personal calling card, to a third party number, or to a non-state number. Employees who do make personal long distance telephone calls and charge them to the Department shall reimburse the Department, per its fiscal procedures, for these calls within five days of receipt by the division of the monthly long distance telephone bill. It shall be the responsibility of the employee to contact his or her division chief to verify the charge for the personal, long distance telephone calls, ascertain the amount owed, and timely reimburse the Department.

Except in cases of emergency, employees are prohibited from accepting collect calls on personal matters.

Calls to state telephone numbers including calls on the Department's intercom system are not necessarily business calls. Calls made to state telephone numbers placed for personal reasons (i.e. retirement benefits, insurance benefits, licensing matters not required for employment, etc.) are personal calls, and therefore, are subject to the limitations set forth in this policy regarding personal calls to state telephone numbers and the employee will be required to reimburse the Department for these calls. Employees who question whether such a call is personal should discuss it with their supervisors or division chief.

### **CELLULAR TELEPHONES, PAGERS, FAX MACHINES, ETC.**

The terms and conditions set forth in this policy also apply to cellular phones, pagers, fax machines, computers and other communications equipment provided by the Department.

Calls made on cellular phones and other communications equipment which result in a separate charge for each use, regardless of whether the call is local or long distance, shall be treated in the same manner as long distance calls. All cellular phone calls must be logged in the same manner as long distance calls.

Employees must reimburse the Department for all non-business cellular phone calls and non-business uses of other communications equipment.

**1-900 CALLS** - Calls to 1-900 numbers are strictly prohibited.

### **TRAVEL CALLS**

Reimbursement is authorized for personal telephone calls when the Department employee is in overnight lodging for more than one (1) week including a weekend. Reimbursement is authorized for reasonable business telephone expenses regardless of the length of stay. See **BUSINESS CALLS** for definition of a business call.

### **CONSUMER LINE 1-800-282-1955**

This line has been established for use by consumers only. Field employees, employees requesting leave or those employees out of the office on business should not use this number when calling the Department. Except for emergencies, absolutely no personal calls should come in on this line.

To curtail costs, calls on this line should be kept short. For extended calls, to reduce costs and free up lines, employees should take the consumer's name and number and return the call.

### **TELEPHONE CALLING CARDS**

The Department assigns telephone credit cards, called calling cards, to its employees to allow them to conduct business by telephone without additional cost or expense to the employees. Calling cards are to be used only for business purposes. **An employee may not authorize any other person, including another employee, to use the employee's credit card or credit card number, unless the employee's division chief gives prior approval.** Such approval should be reserved for emergencies or special circumstances.

Before any employee may be issued a calling card, or if the employee has previously been issued a calling card, in order for the employee to maintain the calling card, the employee must receive and acknowledge receipt of the attached **MEMORANDUM** addressing proper use of the calling card.

If an employee believes his or her calling card number has been compromised, he or she must immediately report it to his or her division chief, and at the same time, surrender the calling card. If the employee fails to report any problem, he or she may be held personally liable or responsible for any non-business charges and may be required to reimburse the Department of these charges.

Upon learning that an employee's calling card has been compromised, the division chief must immediately contact the telecommunications coordinator (as referred to on E3b, page 6 of 7) requesting cancellation of the compromised calling card and issuance of a new one.

The division chief should also instruct the employee to finalize his or her telephone log and turn it in. The chief should complete a telecommunications request form requesting the replacement card.

When an employee is terminated or ceases employment with the Department, he or she must surrender any and all calling cards issued by the Department. The Division Chief shall complete a telecommunications request form for all new employee calling cards.

The Department will issue calling cards to individual employees. Each calling card will have a number separate and distinct from any other calling card, but will be coded to the employee's division. It will be the responsibility of the division chiefs to assign the calling cards to their employees and to prepare and maintain a current and up-to-date record of all calling card assignments.

### **RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

Each employee shall itemize all long distance telephone calls on a long distance call log. There will be at least one telephone log placed by each Department telephone, and a separate telephone log attached or tied to each calling card, cellular phone, and each and every other piece of telecommunication equipment that may result in a separate charge. Field employees (i.e. those employees not headquartered at the Department's offices) and employees out of the office on business must keep and maintain their own telephone logs, i.e. one telephone log for each calling card, cellular phone, etc. Each time an employee records a long distance call, he or she shall initial the entry on the log.

No later than the 5th day of every month, and earlier if requested by the division chief, employees shall turn in to their division chiefs the telephone logs for the previous month. The Department recognizes that more than one employee may record long distance telephone calls on a single telephone log.

For this reason, before the telephone logs are turned in to the division chiefs, each and every employee must certify on that telephone log that the call was for a business purpose. Every employee will make such a certification by signing and dating the log sheet.

Employees must record all long distance calls on the telephone log, fully completing each column for each entry. Employees who have recorded personal or other non-business calls should so designate these calls on the telephone log. Employees who have designated their personal or non-business calls may sign the certification on the telephone log.

Unless otherwise logged or recorded, non-business long distance calls made from a station or telephone regularly assigned to or used by an employee will be assumed to have been made by that employee. Similarly, unlogged long distance calls made from a station or telephone regularly assigned to or used by an employee will be presumed to have been a personal or non-business call made by that employee. Under both of these circumstances, unless the employee can establish that the call was for a business purpose or that he or she did not place the call.

At the end of each month, an itemized list of all long distance telephone calls charged to each Department telephone and calling card is issued by the telephone utility to the Department's telecommunications coordinator. The telecommunications coordinator shall distribute these lists to the division chiefs. The chiefs shall review the long distance bill against the long distance logs kept by the employees and account for all calls not logged on the telephone log, and where necessary, collect reimbursement from the employee. At the discretion of the chief, the chief may distribute these lists to the employees to be checked in the same manner required by the division chiefs.

Employees responsible for personal calls charged to the Department shall reimburse the Department, per its fiscal procedures, for these calls within five (5) days of receipt of the monthly long distance telephone bill or notice from their division chief.

Primary responsibility for enforcement of this policy shall lie with the division chiefs. However, it is the responsibility of each and every employee to report abuses or violations of this policy to their supervisor and/or division chief. It is also the responsibility of each and every employee to timely reimburse the Department in accordance with this policy for all personal and/or non-business calls made or received by the employee.

### **MEMORANDUM**

As an employee of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, you have been issued a telephone credit card, called a calling card, to be used exclusively for business purposes. Before using this card, you should review the Department's telephone policy. However, there are other points of which you should be aware that are not included within the policy. The card is there for you to use when necessary. However, the Department encourages you to memorize your card number. All too often, an employee will lay the card down in order to see the numbers when dialing. This exposes the card to the view of others, who may quickly memorize the number and make long distance telephone calls charged to the Department. Memorizing your number reduces the risk of having the calling card number compromised. To further protect the card number, whenever possible, you should use a touch tone phone. While the calling card number will work on a rotary telephone, you will be required to verbally give your number to an operator. Doing so allows other individuals to overhear your number, again allowing for the number to be compromised.

If at any time you suspect your calling number may have become compromised, you should contact your division chief immediately. You will be required to surrender your current calling card, but you will be issued a new one. If you are required to make business calls at your own expense, you may request reimbursement from the Department. The Department will make every effort to avoid this expense to you. However, your failure to report and surrender your compromised calling card could result in additional expense to you. If you do not report any problems, and the Department subsequently learns of unauthorized calls made against your calling card number, you will be required to reimburse the Department for these calls, unless you can establish that you did not make the calls. To protect yourself and the

Department, please contact your division chief the moment you suspect your card may have been compromised.

Be aware that the telephone policy does require that you keep a log of all long distance calls. You should keep a separate telephone log solely and specifically to record your calling card calls. The log requires that you record your telephone calling card number, the number you have called, the person you have called and the reason for your call. As stated, you are expected to use your telephone calling card only for legitimate business purposes. However, if an emergency situation arises and you must use your calling card for a personal call, you must log this call as you would any other long distance call and indicate that it is for a personal reason. You will then be expected to reimburse the Department for any personal calls.

Remember that telephone calls placed to state numbers are not necessarily business calls. If the call is for a personal reason (i.e., benefits, licensing matters where the license is not required for employment), you should expect to pay for this call.

You are encouraged to maintain a copy of the telephone policy. However, if at any time you have questions about proper telephone or calling card use, you should contact your immediate supervisor or your division chief. It is better to ask questions than to assume an incorrect response and be held responsible.

## EDUCATION

### CONTINUING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (WFD) RELEASE TIME POLICY

It is the policy of the Ohio Department of Agriculture to grant release time to employees for continuing educational purposes. Release time is an authorized leave (without pay) from an individual's job duties. **The supervisor has discretion to allow an employee to utilize a flexible schedule and/or their lunch hour along with leave without pay in order to allow adequate time for the employee to leave work, attend class and return to work.**

Continuing Education and WFD Release Time with pay may only be granted to an individual who wishes to take courses that are directly related to the job they are performing for the Department. Release time will only be granted for courses that are not available at any other time except during the normal work hours and only upon receipt of a written recommendation from the Chief of the Division.

**For any type of educational release time, prior to approval,** a written agreement establishing the course(s), number of hours per week and the length of time needed (i.e., quarter, semester, trimester) must be agreed upon by the employee and their division chief and submitted in writing to the Assistant Director responsible for the respective area of work. The Director has final approval for Continuing Education and WFD Release Time requests.

**STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

The Department can place undergraduate and graduate students as interns. The following guidelines will be followed:

1. Each chief of any division who wishes to utilize an intern must establish a total program for the entire time an intern will work, outlining what the learning experience will be, and how the intern is to be supervised.
2. Student interns may be paid, if the budget permits, according to the pay schedule established by the Governor's Office.
3. Student interns may be unpaid if the internship is required by the educational institution the student intern attends and academic credit will be earned for the internship.

**TRAINING POLICY**

It is the policy of the Department of Agriculture to provide training opportunities to its employees.

Attendance at training seminars must be directly related to the employee's daily responsibilities and must have prior approval of the chief of their respective division.

The Department may pay training fees, contingent upon the availability of agency funding and upon approval of the Assistant Director or Director.

All necessary travel expenses associated with the attendance of training programs/seminars shall be reimbursable in accordance with OBM and Collective Bargaining Guidelines. Out of state travel must be approved by the Director.

Upon completion of a training program, the participant will forward a certificate or other appropriate recognition of course completion to the Division and/or Human Resources for placement in the employee's personnel file.

**TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXEMPT EMPLOYEES**

Employees interested in receiving tuition reimbursement must meet the following criteria:

- Must be full-time, permanent employees who are not on an initial probationary period.
- Must be in full-time permanent status at the completion of the course(s).
- Must obtain formal approval for tuition reimbursement prior to the beginning of the course(s). Refer to the Application Section of this policy for additional details.

**APPROVAL CRITERIA**

The Department will reimburse only for those courses meeting the following criteria:

- The school offering the course is an approved accredited institution.
- The course(s) must be related to the employee's current duties or to duties which the employee may reasonably expect to be assigned in the future within the Department of Agriculture.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

The Tuition Reimbursement application form is available in the Human Resources Office. The application must be completed, approved and submitted ten days prior to the beginning of the course to the Human Resources Office.

Participation in the program is subject to the availability of funds at the time of the request.

**REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES**

Upon completion of the course(s), the employee must provide to the Human Resources Office copies of the following:

- A copy of the school's bill which shows the breakdown of instructional fees as well as other related fees.
- A copy of employee's proof of payment to the school.
- A copy of the final grade for the course(s).

A grade of C or better is necessary to receive tuition reimbursement. Based upon the availability of funds, the Department of Agriculture Director has the right to waive the 80% and \$500 limit, if deemed appropriate. Books, fees, supplies or any other expenses are not reimbursable.

**REVIEW COURSES FOR CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS**

The same eligibility rules apply for review course(s) as for tuition reimbursement.

**APPROVAL CRITERIA**

The employee must complete the Tuition Reimbursement application form and have it approved by their direct supervisor and deputy director. The supervisor and deputy director certify that taking the exam is directly related to the employee's current job duties or to duties which the employee may reasonably expect to be assigned within the Division or Department of Agriculture.

**REIMBURSEMENT**

Follow the same procedures as for Tuition Reimbursement.

**NOTE: AFSCME Bargaining Unit Employees apply for their Tuition Assistance through the Workforce Development Program. (WFD).**

## INTERVIEW POLICY

### **PURPOSE**

To allow employees within ODA opportunities for promotional/lateral employment moves consistent with EEO/Affirmative Action initiatives.

### **PROCEDURE**

Department of Agriculture employees may make application with the ODA Human Resources Office, Bromfield Administration Building, 8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068 for vacancies posted within ODA.

Applicants will be screened for minimum qualifications. Those bargaining unit employees who meet the minimum qualifications will be interviewed pursuant to all guidelines as set forth in Article 17 of the AFSCME/OCSEA Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Exempt employees who meet the minimum qualifications will also be afforded an interview.

Employees scheduled for an interview during their regularly scheduled workday will be able to interview on state time. Travel time to and from the interview will be included.

### **PROHIBITIONS**

Employees cannot use State Vehicles to travel to/from on interview.

Employees are not entitled to mileage and/or other State travel status expenses when traveling to/from an interview.

**EXIT INTERVIEW**

All employees who voluntarily leave employment with ODA shall be asked to complete and submit an Exit Interview Form.

The Exit Interview Form shall be reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Administrator. The form shall be provided to the departing employee by the Human Resources Office and the completed form shall be returned to that office.

The Human Resources Administrator shall be responsible for collecting and collating data from exit interviews, as well as determining the use and distribution of said data.

To assure fairness and consistency in the reference checking process all employment information, whether being solicited or provided, should be channeled through ODA's Human Resources Office. This procedure applies to the providing of information on current or former employees and to the gathering of information on applicants.

### **CURRENT OR FORMER EMPLOYEES**

- Requests for employment references on current or former employees, whether by telephone or in writing, should be forwarded to ODA's Labor Relations Officer or the Human Resources Administrator.
- When contacted for an employment reference, Human Resources typically will provide only routine information, such as job titles and dates of employment. When a supervisor is contacted for an employment reference for a current or former employee for whom he/she wishes to provide a more detailed reference, the supervisor shall provide the Human Resources Administrator with additional appropriate information to be conveyed to the requestor.
- If the potential employer seeking information specifically requests comments from the Director of ODA, Human Resources will so inform the Director.

### **REFERENCE LETTERS**

- Current or former employees may, from time to time, request a reference letter. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to insure that such letters are consistent in the type of information they provide and will concur with the information documented in the individual's formal personnel file. Additionally, they are subject to broad misinterpretation and misuse. Therefore, ODA managers may prepare reference letters only with the prior approval of the Director of ODA, the Assistant Director, or the Human Resources Administrator. All reference letters must be reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Administrator or designee prior to release.
- Reference letters from applicants should not be encouraged. Reference letters may occasionally be offered voluntarily by a candidate; however, for the reasons noted above, the information contained in these letters should not be weighted heavily during the selection process.

### **APPLICANTS**

- Employment reference information on all final applicants for open positions within ODA will be sought prior to any offers of employment. These checks will be conducted by only the Human Resources Office. Exceptions to this policy shall be made only for good cause, with the prior approval of the Human Resources Administrator.

- Because the Human Resources staff will seek only information related to an applicant's work-related qualification, personal references (e.g., friends, neighbors) will not be solicited. This confidential information will be shared only with the manager who has an opening for which the applicant is being considered.

Any employee who resigns his/her position with the Department or transfers to another state agency should submit a letter of resignation and notification to the Director with copies to his/her immediate supervisor, Division Chief and the Office of Human Resources at least two weeks prior to a scheduled date of departure.

When leaving the Department, employees must return all keys (e.g., desk, door and/or file cabinet keys), all cards (e.g., Department ID, building pass, telephone and/or gas card) and special equipment including but not limited to computers, computer accessories, cell phones and cell phone accessories issued to them, all resource material borrowed and the Employee Handbook. A property clearance form will be issued by Human Resources which must be signed by the Human Resources Administrator verifying that all items have been returned in order to prevent delay of issuance of final paycheck. All materials other than personal effects are and should remain the property of the Department. The immediate supervisor should be made aware if the employee is retaining copies of public documents.

All requests for legislative initiatives/proposals within the Department shall be made in writing and submitted to the Legislative Liaison Officer for review and input. It shall be the responsibility of the Legislative Liaison Officer to serve as a resource for any division or office considering the initiation of legislation.

### **INTERACTION WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS**

The Legislative Liaison Officer shall have the primary responsibility and authority to interact with federal and state elected officials. Prior to any employee communicating or meeting with an elected official relative to Agriculture issues, a review must first be completed by the Legislative Liaison Officer. Routine inquiries, such as grant or loan status requests or programmatic information requests, do not require review.

All contacts to or from the news media (e.g., television, radio, newspapers or magazines) require prior approval from the Communications Office. Press Releases for the Department shall be initiated only by the Communications Office.

***EXEMPT EMPLOYEES/BARGAINING UNIT EMPLOYEES*****CLASSIFIED**

Employees within ODA receive a mid-probationary evaluation at the end of three months of employment. At the end of six months of employment, all employees receive a final probationary evaluation. At the end of one year of continuous service, all employees receive an annual review. Classified exempt employees may appeal their performance evaluation following the steps listed below, while bargaining unit employees follow Article 22 of the OCSEA Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**Appeal Process**

- Send a written notice of performance evaluation appeal to the Labor Relations Officer within seven working days after the employee has received the completed evaluation form for signature. The initial rater or immediate supervisor will be contacted to set up a Step One meeting to review and discuss the performance evaluation of the employee. A meeting will be held within seven working days of notification of an appeal. The initial rater or immediate supervisor will issue a written response within seven working days after the meeting. The employee must submit a letter within seven working days requesting an appeal to the Labor Relations Officer if he or she is not satisfied with the Step One response.
- The Labor Relations Officer will schedule a Step Two meeting with the employee and the initial rater or immediate supervisor within seven working days of notification of an appeal. The Labor Relations Officer will issue a written response within seven working days after the meeting. The response by the Labor Relations Officer will be the final response of the Department.
- Classified exempt employees who are unsatisfied with the response may appeal to DAS within thirty (30) days following the date that the employee signs the evaluation or the date that the appointing authority signs the evaluation, whichever is later. An employee shall not be entitled to such a review until he or she has exhausted all available internal review procedures of the employing agency.
- Time lines to review an appeal may be mutually extended after it has been timely filed within seven (7) working days.

**UNCLASSIFIED**

Unclassified exempt employees are considered at-will employees and have no tenure rights and serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority. An unclassified exempt employee is always subject to being evaluated on his or her performance.

**AFSCME EMPLOYEES**

AFSCME employees in pay ranges 1-7 and 23-28 receive a mid-probationary performance evaluation at the end of 60 days. At the end of 120 days, the employee receives a final-probationary performance evaluation. Job classifications paid in pay ranges 8-12 and 29-36 receive a mid-probationary performance evaluation at the end of 90 days and a final-probationary evaluation at the end of 180 days. At the end of one year of continuous service, AFSCME employees receive an annual review. Please refer to your contract for appeal procedures.

ODA employees are not to receive personal mail in volume or regularly at their business address. This does not apply to greeting cards, unsolicited mail, or to employees headquartered at their residence.

Ohio Administrative Code Section 123:1-1-02 provides that all personnel records are considered to be public records available for public inspection at the appropriate employee record center. All official personnel records for the Ohio Department of Agriculture are housed in the Human Resources Office at 8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068. The Human Resources Administrator is the custodian of these files.

All ODA personnel shall be allowed reasonable access to their official employee file.

All records which would normally be maintained by the Department in employee personnel files constitute public records and, as such, must be included in the official personnel file. Other documents, such as letters or complaints detailing the actions of any given employee, are not records required to be kept in the ordinary course of business. Therefore, these complaints need not be included in an employee personnel file. Wayside Farms, Inc. vs. Ohio 4003<sup>rd</sup> 364, (1977). In addition, personal notes and memoranda not ordinarily compiled in the course of business and not compiled for the purpose of formally disciplining an employee need not be included in an employee's official personnel file.

All requests to review personnel files must be complied with in a reasonable time. For employees housed at Reynoldsburg or in the field, reasonable access will be allowed during working hours. No personnel record shall be removed from the official records unless so ordered by a court of law, the State Personnel Board of Review, or the Director of Administrative Services. (*See OAC 123:1-1-02 above.*)

It is the mission of the Ohio Department of Agriculture to achieve a smoke-free workplace. It is extremely important that management provide a healthy environment in which all employees can work with as few health risks as possible. It has been determined that passive secondary smoke is harmful to smokers and non-smokers alike.

The implementation of this smoking/no smoking work rule will protect all people from secondary smoke during the performance of their duties as well as during their lunch and break times respectively.

In an effort to improve productivity in the workplace and achieve a safer work environment, this Department adopted the following smoking/no smoking work rule effective March 20, 1989.

The smoking of cigarettes, pipes, cigars or the burning of any smoke producing substance is prohibited in any enclosed space owned, leased, operated or occupied by ODA.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All Ohio Department of Agriculture employees are responsible for understanding and complying with this work rule. Supervisors are responsible for enforcement. Violators will be subject to the same disciplinary actions that accompany infractions of other Ohio Department of Agriculture directives, Ohio Administrative Rules and ODA Work Rules.

### **DESIGNATED SMOKING AREAS AT REYNOLDSBURG COMPLEX**

An outside smoking area will be designated for each building where Ohio Department of Agriculture employees work.

### **BROMFIELD BUILDING**

Designated smoking areas have been established for the Bromfield Administration Building. All smokers are asked to either smoke outside the west door of the Bromfield, or on the loading dock - your ODA badge will be needed to enter and exit. Access arrangements for the loading dock door are being made through the Enforcement Division to allow accessibility. *Please do not prop open the outside doors while smoking, an alarm will go off.* **ODA supervisors are reminded that they must monitor employee smoking breaks.**

Visitors/seminar participants to the Bromfield Administration Building may obtain access to the smoking area through the door on the west side of the building from the front desk employee.

**GUIDELINES FOR SMOKING IN AN OUTSIDE DESIGNATED AREA**

1. Smoking is permitted in outside designated areas only during non-work times such as before work, after work, official breaks (limited to one in the A.M. and one in the P.M. not to exceed 15 minutes each) and during lunch.
2. Employees working outside shall be permitted to smoke at the times indicated above and at other times so long as the smoking does not interfere with the work or with other employees.

**GUIDELINES FOR SMOKING/NO SMOKING IN VEHICLES**

All Ohio Department of Agriculture vehicles shall be designated as smoke free, unless the following criteria are met:

1. In Pool vehicles (those not permanently assigned to a specific individual) an employee may smoke only if all other passengers in the vehicle agree. It shall be the duty of the smoker to ask all other passengers before lighting up.
2. In State vehicles permanently assigned to one person, that person must agree before anyone smokes in the vehicle. In addition, all passengers in the vehicle must concur. It shall be the duty of the smoker to ask all other passengers before lighting up.

**GUIDELINES FOR FIELD STAFF**

1. Department of Agriculture employees working in the field will adhere to smoking guidelines as set forth by the plant and or establishment to which they are assigned.

**SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAMS**

Employees shall be permitted to use reasonable amounts of accrued leave (sick leave, personal leave, or vacation leave) to travel and attend a bona fide smoking cessation programs in their geographic area.

**Procedure** - Employees must request the appropriate leave in accordance with current practice.

Supervisors will request verification of the session to be attended and will be advised as to where the session is being held. Granting of such time will be subject to the operational needs of the employer, but will not be unreasonably denied.

Upon successful completion of the smoking program, and upon presentation of a certificate of completion or other verification, the employee shall be restored leave used for travel to and attendance of such a program. **THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF LEAVE WHICH CAN BE RESTORED TO AN EMPLOYEE IS EIGHT HOURS.**

**DISCIPLINE**

Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with provisions of the Ohio Revised Code and the applicable collective bargaining agreement (AFSCME/OCSEA).

Discipline taken shall be corrective rather than punitive. Emphasis shall be placed upon counseling, oral reprimands and written reprimands. However, suspensions and termination shall result for repeated violations of this policy, after repeated reprimands and/or incidents have occurred.

\***AFTER** September 15, 1993, an employee's completion of a bona fide smoking cessation program may be considered as a mitigating factor in the imposition of discipline for the violation of the smoke-free workplace policy.

Nothing in this section shall preclude the employer from taking necessary disciplinary action for other incidents which may be related to the violation of the smoke-free workplace policy.

Employees wishing to donate blood or volunteer their time for any other cause, during work hours, must use leave time. The only exception to this policy will be in connection with an agency-sponsored event.

Under the authority of Ohio Administrative Rule 123:1-32-07 and Ohio Revised Code Chapter 199, it is the policy of the Department of Agriculture to deny use of accrued personal leave and vacation leave to extend the date of separation.

The balance of accrued personal leave and vacation leave of an employee will be paid at the time of separation.

The following procedures will be followed in the event of a weather emergency declaration by the Governor or the Director of the Department of Public Safety. No other department, agency head or their designee has any authority to declare such an emergency in any part of the State of Ohio.

- ODA will attempt to communicate a declared weather emergency to all non-essential employees in a timely manner, if it occurs during a working day. Non-essential employees will not be compensated for more than their normal eight hour scheduled day if they are not notified in a timely manner. Non-essential employees may not leave their work site until the declaration of the weather emergency is announced by management.
- Non-essential employees are directed to listen to local radio and TV stations for announcements by the Governor or the Director of Public Safety during non-working hours for a declaration of an official weather emergency. Municipal or County weather emergencies are not recognized by the State of Ohio for its employees.
- All Department of Agriculture employees will be designated as non-essential for weather emergencies, unless specifically designated by the Director of Agriculture as essential.
- Non-essential employees will not be required to work if a weather emergency is declared by the Governor or the Director of the Department of Public Safety. Non-essential employees will be compensated at their regular rate of pay for hours they were normally scheduled to work during the weather emergency.
- Essential employees, as specifically designated by the Director of Agriculture, will be compensated with compensatory leave for the duration of the weather emergency.
- Non-essential employees who are at work on the day a weather emergency is declared will be excused from work for the remainder of that normal working day. No leave time will be charged to these employees. The time after employees are released will be considered as emergency hours.
- Non-essential employees who do not report to work and who were pre-scheduled to be absent prior to the declaration of the weather emergency are required to use their leave for their normal hours.
- If a late arrival time is declared as part of the weather emergency, non-essential employees must report to work at the designated hour the day of the weather emergency, unless proper leave has been requested. Employees must call within one-half hour of their emergency starting time. Employees who do not request

proper leave for the absence will be considered in an absent without leave pay status.

Any employee who chooses to remain at work after the declaration of a weather emergency will not be compensated any more than his/her normal working hours.