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Policy Title: Violence Prevention Policy	Date: August 10, 2021	Resolution No.

Purpose: The Purpose of this policy is to adopt a proactive approach to the prevention and management of workplace violence, outline expectations of employees and the employer in reporting and responding to violence incidents if they occur, and ensure workplace violence will not be tolerated.

1. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms are defined:

- 1.1 **Complainant** means the person who makes a complaint or brings a harassment, disrespectful behavior or discrimination issue to the attention of the Employer.
- 1.2 **Employee** means Birch Hills employees, contractors providing service for or to Birch Hills, and volunteers, and includes Members of Council, for the purposes of this policy.
- 1.3 **Birch Hills** means Birch Hills County.
- 1.4 **Respondent** means the person whose behavior is being complained about.
- 1.5 **Retaliation** means to hurt or attempt to hurt somebody in return, to deliberately harm or attempt to harm somebody in response or revenge for an action he or she has done.
- 1.6 **Threat** means any act, gesture or statement that gives an employee, or another person, reasonable cause to believe that there is risk of injury to themselves or another person or damage to property.
- 1.7 **Violence** (whether at a work site or work related) means the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm. Workplace violence can include:
 - a. Physical attack or aggression (e.g. hitting, shoving, pushing or kicking a worker, throwing an object at a worker, kicking an object the worker is standing on, such as a ladder);
 - b. Threatening behavior (e.g. shaking a fist in a worker’s face, wielding a weapon at work, trying to hit a worker, trying to run down a worker using a vehicle or equipment such as a forklift, destroying property or throwing objects);



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- c. Verbal or written threats (e.g verbally threatening to attack a worker, leaving threatening notes or sending threatening emails to express an intent to inflict harm on a worker);
- d. Damage to property;
- e. Domestic violence;
- f. Sexual violence.

1.8 **Workplace** means place where an employee is, or may be, conducting work on behalf of Birch Hills, including work-related social gatherings.

1.9 **Human Resources** means the Chief Administrative Officer, Director, Manager or appointed team lead, the Birch Hills County employee reports to. In the event the concern is related to the employee’s designated Supervisor, the employee will bring the matter to the attention of the Chief Administrative Officer. Or, in the event the matter concerns the Chief Administrative Officer, the concern will be brought to the attention of the County’s Chief Elected Official (Reeve).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Birch Hills is committed to making the workplace as safe as is reasonably practicable for employees and users of Birch Hills services. The commitment is supported by Birch Hills Respectful Workplace Policy and is reflected in Birch Hills values.

2.2 Birch Hills believes in the prevention of violence and promotes a violence-free workplace in which all people respect one another and work together to achieve common goals. Any act of violence committed by or against any worker or member of the public is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated.

2.3 Principles:

2.3.1 We are committed to:

- a. Investigating reported incidents of violence in a objective and timely manner;
- b. Taking necessary corrective action;
- c. Not disclose the names of the complainant, the alleged respondent, or any witnesses, except where necessary to investigate the incident and take corrective action, or to inform involved parties of investigation results and actions taken, if necessary to inform workers of a threat of violence or potential violence, or as required by law; and



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d. Disclose the minimum amount of personal information required to inform workers of a threat of violence or potential violence.

2.3.2 This violence prevention policy is not intended to discourage a worker from exercising their rights pursuant to any other law (e.g., contacting police, human rights complaint, etc.)

2.4 No worker or any other individual affiliated with Birch Hills shall subject any other person to violence.

2.5 The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act prohibits acts of violence in the workplace.

2.5.1 Birch Hills must develop and implement a harassment prevention plan and a violence prevention plan as per Section 390.4(1) of the OHS Act.

2.5.2 A violence prevention plan must include a violence prevention policy and violence prevention procedures in accordance with the requirements set out in Section 390.1 and 390.2 of the OHS Act.

2.5.3 As per Section 390.7(4) of the OHS Act, Birch Hills must review this policy, at minimum, every three (3) years.

3 APPLICABILITY

3.1 This policy applies to all Birch Hills employees and Members of Council.

3.2 For the purposes of this policy, the workplace includes:

3.2.1 Work related conferences, training sessions, and travel;

3.2.2 Birch Hills related functions;

3.2.3 Birch Hills property, including contact sites;

3.2.4 Virtual environment, including phone, e-mail, social media, and other electronic means; and

3.2.5 Working and non-working as long as there is a relationship to Birch Hills activities.



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3.3 This policy has the following exceptions:

- 3.3.1 Harassment and discrimination or other behaviors addressed in the Respectful Workplace Policy; and
- 3.3.2 Violence occurring between employees offsite during non-worktime will be evaluated to determine whether any other Birch Hills policies apply (e.g. Respectful Workplace Policy).

4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Birch Hills responsibilities include:

- 4.1.1 Ensuring that Birch Hills employees and members of the public (including customers) are not subject to or do not participate in harassment or violence in the workplace;
- 4.1.2 Developing policy and procedures respecting potential workplace harassment and violence, and understanding health and safety responsibilities;
- 4.1.3 Informing and educating employees to recognize workplace harassment and violence, and understand the avenues to report harassment and violence;
- 4.1.4 Conducting hazard assessments;
- 4.1.5 Developing and implementing appropriate responses to workplace harassment and violence; and
- 4.1.6 Developing procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of workplace harassment and violence.

4.2 Employee responsibilities include:

- 4.2.1 Creating and maintaining a respectful workplace by:
 - a. Being familiar with and following this policy;
 - b. Ensuring behavior is respectful and appropriate at all times;
 - c. Accepting responsibility for actions, reactions, and behaviors and impact on others;



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- d. Making concerns known promptly if something is troubling. **If at any time reasonable suspicion is made that there is imminent danger of physical harm, from any one, immediately calling 911;**
- e. Reporting incidents of workplace harassment and violence as soon as possible; and
- f. Being a part of the solution by engaging in steps to resolve the matter.

4.3 Senior Leadership responsibilities include:

- 4.3.1 Being familiar with and following this policy;
- 4.3.2 Being a role model as reflected in Birch Hills’s values;
- 4.3.3 Ensuring employees are aware of, and compliant with, this policy;
- 4.3.4 Taking appropriate action in a prompt, impartial and confidential manner when Respectful Workplace Policy allegations come to your attention;
- 4.3.5 Supporting all parties involved in resolving allegations under the Respectful Workplace Policy with the appropriate option for resolution;
- 4.3.6 Ensuring no person suffers reprisal or retaliation as a result of making a complaint in good faith or for providing information in good faith; and
- 4.3.7 Consulting with Human Resources as necessary.

5 PREVENTION AND ASSESSMENT OF RISK

- 5.1 The ultimate objective is to prevent violence from occurring at Birch Hills workplaces.
- 5.2 Birch Hills as an employer has a role in prevention by:
 - 5.2.1 Identifying and assessing risks at Birch Hills workplaces, including workplace violence;
 - 5.2.2 Working collaboratively across departments to assist in implementing appropriate mitigation measures to address risks;



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5.2.3 Specifically, in instances where Birch Hills becomes reasonably aware that domestic violence may spill over in the workplace and that it would likely expose an individual to physical injury, Birch Hills will take every reasonable precaution to ensure the protection of the individual.

5.3 Employees have a role in prevention by:

5.3.1 Learning to identify warning signs of workplace violence;

5.3.2 Refraining from workplace violence;

5.3.3 Reporting, in accordance with this policy, any violent incidents or warning signs they observe at work.

6 REPORTING PROCEDURE

6.1 Each employee has a responsibility to ensure that his or her work environment is safe and secure. Employees must report any violent acts occurring or that may occur in the workplace, including threats and warning signs of violent behavior. Employees must immediately inform their supervisor if they:

6.1.1 Have been threatened;

6.1.2 Have been subjected to a violent act at work or during the course of their work;

6.1.3 Have witnessed a threat or violent act against or by an employee; or

6.1.4 Have reason to believe that they, another employee, a member of the public or Birch Hills property may become a target of violence.

6.2 Employees who do not feel comfortable reporting the situation to their supervisor can report directly to any member of the leadership team or Human Resources. **If a situation presents an imminent threat to an employee's safety, an employee must call 9-1-1 and ask for assistance from the Police.**

6.3 Employees should document the complaint and keep a record detailing the incident. Write down factual dates, times, witnesses, location, what was said, etc.



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- 6.4 These incidents will be reported by the employee or supervisor to Human Recourses to ensure an effective investigation takes place and an appropriate response is developed.
- 6.5 Human Resources must be advised when any legal action, criminal or civil, is related to an incident (e.g. restraining order).
- 6.6 Where an incident occurs and the health, safety and welfare of persons or property is at risk, the Police need to be contacted immediately to intervene. Once the Police have been contacted, Human Resources needs to be advised.

7 INVESTIGATING AND RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- 7.1 Barring exceptional circumstances, a report of complaint is to be made as promptly as possible to ensure a timely investigation and resolution can be achieved.
- 7.2 Formal complaints of harassment will be handled, where possible, expediently and discreetly. Formal complaints will be investigated thoroughly by trained investigators. Human Resources and/or an independent third-party specialist will conduct an investigation of violence. Human Resources will ensure document control for all complaints of violence within the scope of this policy.
- 7.3 The investigator(s) will meet with the complainant, seek specific information on the complaint, and ensure the complainant fully understands the investigation process. The complainant will be advised that the complainant can withdraw from any further action in connection with the complaint, at any stage, although Birch Hills may continue to investigate the complaint.
 - 7.3.1 Birch Hills will advise an employee who, as a victim of workplace violence, may be experiencing adverse symptoms as a result of the violent act that they should consider consulting with a health professional. Services are also available from Birch Hills Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provider, free of charge.
- 7.4 In a timely manner, the investigator(s) will interview the respondent. If necessary, the investigator(s) will interview any witnesses named by the complainant and respondent. All employees of Birch Hills have a responsibility to co-operate in the investigation.
- 7.5 If underlying causes in an incident are identified during an investigation, recommendations may be provided for immediate preventative action.



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- 7.6 Following the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator(s) will inform the Human Resources Manager, if necessary, and the applicable leader of the findings and determine appropriate next steps(s). The complainant and respondent will also be informed following conclusion of the investigation, if necessary, the Chief Administration Office (CAO) will be informed/consulted.
- 7.7 Details pertaining to the actual investigation will remain confidential with Human Resources accessible only by a designated member involved with the investigation. Disclosure of the circumstances of the complaint and/or persons involved will only occur if required for the investigation, corrective action or by law.

8 FALSE OR FRIVOLOUS COMPLAINTS

- 8.1 Complaints that are found to be false, frivolous or made in bad faith will not be tolerated and will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action or denial of Birch Hills service.

9 RETALIATION

- 9.1 Everyone has the right to report, in good faith, incidents of inappropriate workplace behavior without fear of retaliation
- 9.2 Retaliation by any person against anyone involved in informal or formal complaint processes will not be tolerated and will be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal or denial of Birch Hills services.
- 9.3 This policy does not discourage or prevent any person from exercising their rights under any law, including the Alberta Human Rights Act.

10 CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

- 10.1 Employees failing to adhere to the items contained in this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. What is appropriate action will depend in the circumstances of the incident and may range from, but not be limited to, warnings and suspensions, up to and including dismissal, Incidents may also be referred to the Police for investigation.
- 10.2 Contractors, suppliers, volunteers, and members of the public are expected to adhere to this policy. If violence occurs, Birch Hills will take appropriate action to ensure a

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safe workplace. This could include discontinuing business with individuals or organizations, issuing Trespass Notices or referring the matter to the Police.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood this policy, and accept all responsibilities outlined within.

Original to be signed

Rick Bastow
Chief Administrative

Original to be signed

Gerald Manzulenko
Officer Reeve

Adopted by Council : Date:
Updated: previous Violence policy from Safety Manual