



TALBOT SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Dear Valued Employee,

Welcome to the Talbot Soil Conservation District! We are pleased with your decision to join our team.

The Talbot Soil Conservation District is committed to providing superior quality and unparalleled customer service in all aspects of our business. We believe each employee contributes to the success and growth of our District.

This employee handbook contains general information on our policies, practices, and benefits. Please read it carefully. If you have questions regarding the handbook, please discuss them with your District Manager.

Welcome aboard, we look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

John Swaine III
Chairman

Shawn D. Smith
District Manager

Effective 11/1/19



Talbot SCD Employee Manual
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General Information

District History

The Talbot Soil Conservation District (TSCD) was created in April 1958 and was the last District created in Maryland.

The TSCD serves a primarily rural agricultural region. Grain and vegetable operations, dairy farms, and poultry farms comprise the agricultural makeup of the area. Bordered on three sides by water and boasting over 600 miles of tidal shoreline, the District is involved heavily in protecting the county's water resources. District staff work with landowners and farmers to develop Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQPs) outlining Best Management Practices (BMPs) needed to maintain agricultural production and minimize downstream water quality problems.

District Goals, Values, and Beliefs

Our goal at the TSCD is simple: extraordinary customer service. We accomplish this by observing a common set of values and by partnering with organizations that have the finest reputation for quality. There are no shortcuts; we believe that our goals are accomplished only with a real commitment from every employee.

Our values and beliefs require that we:

- Treat employees and colleagues with respect; The TSCD does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
- Encourage all employees in creative problem solving.
- Provide consistent leadership and competent on-the-job training.
- Maintain an open-door policy that encourages interaction and discussion; encourage ideas to improve the workplace and increase productivity.
- Provide effective and efficient corrective action to resolve customer service issues and ensure complete customer satisfaction.
- Deliver competitive, outstanding service to our customers and partner with vendors who share that goal.
- Make "Do It Right the First Time" our team attitude to ensure continued growth and prosperity.

Changes in Policy

District change is inevitable. Therefore, we expressly reserve the right to interpret, modify, suspend, cancel, or dispute, with or without notice, all or any part of our policies, procedures, and benefits at any time with or without prior notice. Changes will be effective on the dates determined by the TSCD, and after those dates all superseded policies will be null and void.

No individual supervisor or manager has the authority to alter the foregoing. All changes will be approved by the District Board during a regular monthly meeting. Any employee who is unclear on any policy or procedure should consult the District Manager.

General Employment

At-Will Employment

Employment with the TSCD is "at-will." This means employees are free to resign at any time, with or without cause, and the TSCD may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or advance notice. As an at-will employee, it is not guaranteed, in any manner, that you will be employed with the TSCD for any set period of time.

The policies set forth in this employee handbook are the policies that are in effect at the time of publication. They may be amended, modified, or terminated at any time by the TSCD, except for the policy on at-will employment, which may be modified only by a signed, written agreement between the Chairman, District Manager and the employee at issue. Nothing in this handbook may be construed as creating a promise of future benefits or a binding contract between the TSCD and any of its employees.

Immigration Law Compliance

The TSCD is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, as amended, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if they have not completed an I-9 with the TSCD within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

The TSCD may participate in the federal government's electronic employment verification system, known as "E-Verify." Pursuant to E-Verify, the TSCD provides the Social Security Administration, and if necessary, the Department of Homeland Security with the information from each new employee's Form I-9 to confirm work authorization.

Equal Employment Opportunity

TSCD is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Employment opportunities at TSCD are based upon one's qualifications and capabilities to perform the essential functions of a particular job. All employment opportunities are provided without regard to race, religion, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, national origin, age, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law.

This Equal Employment Opportunity policy governs all aspects of employment, including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, selection, job assignment, promotions, transfers, compensation, discipline, termination, layoff, access to benefits and training, and all other conditions and privileges of employment.

The TSCD will provide reasonable accommodations as necessary and where required by law so long as the accommodation does not pose an undue hardship on the business. This policy is not intended to afford employees with any greater protections than those which exist under federal, state or local law.

The TSCD strongly urges the reporting of all instances of discrimination and harassment, and prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination, harassment, or participates in an investigation of such report. The TSCD will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination, will be taken against any employee who violates this policy.

Outside Employment

Employees may hold outside jobs as long as the employee meets the performance standards of their position with the TSCD and has received prior authorization as noted below.

Unless an alternative work schedule has been approved by the TSCD, employees will be subject to the District's scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work assignments; this includes availability for overtime when necessary.

The TSCD's property, office space, equipment, materials, trade secrets, and any other confidential information may not be used for any purposes relating to outside employment.

NOTE: All outside employment must be presented to the District Manager for approval by the TSCD Board of Supervisors. Approval must be granted by the Board before accepting any outside employment. Failure to receive approval before you begin the second job may jeopardize your position with the District.

Employee Grievances

It is the policy of the TSCD to maintain a harmonious workplace environment. The TSCD encourages its employees to express concerns about work-related issues, including workplace communication, interpersonal conflict, and other working conditions.

Employees are encouraged to raise concerns with the District Manager. If not resolved at this level, an employee may submit, in writing, a signed grievance to the Chairman of the Board.

After receiving a written grievance, the TSCD Supervisors may hold a meeting with the employee, the District Manager, and any other individuals who may assist in the investigation or resolution of the issue. All discussions related to the grievance will be limited to those involved with, and who can assist with, resolving the issue.

Complaints involving alleged discriminatory practices shall be processed in accordance with the TSCD's Sexual and other Unlawful Harassment Policy.

The TSCD assures that all employees filing a grievance or complaint can do so without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

Internal Communication

Effective and ongoing communication within the TSCD is essential. As such, the District maintains systems through which important information can be shared among employees and management.

Bulletin boards are posted in designated areas of the workplace to display important information and announcements. In addition, the TSCD uses internet and email to facilitate communication and share access to documents. For information on appropriate email and internet usage, employees may refer to the Computer, Email, and Internet Usage policy

All employees are responsible for checking internal communications on a frequent and regular basis. Employees should consult the District Manager with any questions or concerns on information disseminated.

Anti-Retaliation and Whistleblower Protection

This policy is designed to protect employees and address the TSCD's commitment to integrity and ethical behavior. In accordance with anti-retaliation and whistleblower protection regulations, the TSCD will not tolerate any retaliation against an employee who:

- Makes a good faith complaint, or threatens to make a good faith complaint, regarding suspected District or employee violations of the law, including discriminatory or other unfair employment practices;
- Makes a good faith complaint regarding accounting, internal accounting controls, or auditing matters that may lead to incorrect, or misrepresentations in, financial accounting;

- Makes a good faith report, or threatens to make a good faith report, of a violation that endangers the health or safety of an employee, client or customer, environment or general public.
- Objects to, or refuses to participate in, any activity, policy or practice, which the employee reasonably believes is a violation of the law;
- Provides information to assist in an investigation regarding violations of the law; or
- Files, testifies, or participates in a proceeding, action or hearing in relation to alleged violations of the law.

Retaliation is defined as any adverse employment action against an employee, including, but not limited to, refusal to hire, failure to promote, demotion, suspension, and harassment, denial of training opportunities, termination, or discrimination in any manner in the terms and conditions of employment.

Anyone found to have engaged in retaliation or in violation of law; policy or practice will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Employees who knowingly make a false report of a violation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees who wish to report a violation should contact the District Manager directly. Employees should also review their state and local requirements for any additional reporting guidelines.

The TSCD will promptly and thoroughly investigate and, if necessary, address any reported violation.

Employees who have any questions or concerns regarding this policy and related reporting requirements should contact the District Manager or any state or local agency responsible for investigating alleged violations.

Employment Status and Record Keeping

Employment Classifications

For purposes of salary administration and eligibility for overtime payments and employee benefits, the TSCD classifies employees as either exempt or non-exempt. Non-exempt employees are entitled to overtime pay in accordance with federal and state overtime provisions. Exempt employees are exempt from federal and state overtime laws and, but for a few narrow exceptions, are generally paid a fixed amount of pay for each workweek in which work is performed.

If you change positions during your employment with the TSCD or if your job responsibilities change, you will be informed by the District Manager of any change in your exempt status.

Currently, all TSCD staff positions are considered exempt and not eligible for overtime pay. However, employees are eligible to earn compensatory time.

In addition to your designation of either exempt or non-exempt, you also belong to one of the following employment categories:

Full-Time:

Full-time employees are regularly scheduled to work greater or equal to 40 hours per week. Generally, regular full-time employees are eligible for the TSCD 's benefits, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

Part-Time:

Part-time employees are regularly scheduled to work less than 40 hours per week. Regular part-time employees may be eligible for some TSCD benefit programs, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

Temporary/Contractual:

Temporary/Contractual employees include those hired for a limited time to assist in a specific function or in the completion of a specific project. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status or classification. Temporary employees retain temporary status unless and until they are notified by the TSCD Management, of a change. They are not eligible for any of the TSCD 's benefit programs.

Personnel Data Changes

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify the District Manager of any changes in personnel data. Such changes may affect your eligibility for benefits, the amount you pay for benefit premiums, and your receipt of important company information.

If any of the following have changed or will change in the coming future, contact the District Manager in writing as soon as possible:

- Legal name
- Mailing address
- Telephone number(s)
- Change of beneficiary
- Exemptions on your tax forms
- Emergency contact(s)
- Training certificates
- Professional licenses

Expense Reimbursement

The TSCD reimburses employees for necessary expenditures and reasonable costs incurred in the course of doing their jobs. Expenses incurred by an employee must be approved in advance by the District Manager.

Some expenses that may warrant reimbursement include, but are not limited, to the following: mileage costs, air or ground transportation costs, lodging, and meals for the purpose of carrying out company business, and any other reimbursable expenses as required by law. Employees are expected to make a reasonable effort to limit business expenses to economical options. Reimbursement will be equal or less than the amount set by State of Maryland guidelines.

To be reimbursed, employees must submit expense reports to the District Manager for approval. The report must be accompanied by receipts or other documentation substantiating the expenses. The District expense form will be supplied as an electronic document. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the District Manager.

Termination of Employment

Termination of employment is an inevitable part of personnel activity within any organization, and many of the reasons for termination are routine. Common circumstances under which employment is terminated include the following:

- **Resignation** - Voluntary employment termination initiated by an employee.
- **Termination** - Involuntary employment termination initiated by the TSCD. In most cases, the TSCD will use progressive disciplinary actions before dismissing an employee. However, certain actions warrant immediate termination.
- **Layoff** - Involuntary employment termination initiated by the TSCD for non-disciplinary reasons.
- **Retirement** - Voluntary employee termination upon eligibility for retirement.

All employees, for any reason, who intend to terminate employment with the TSCD, shall provide the TSCD with at least two (2) weeks written notice. Such notice is intended to allow the District time to adjust to the employee's departure without placing undue burden on those employees who may be required to fill in before a replacement can be found.

Since employment with the TSCD is based on mutual consent, both the employee and the TSCD have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause, during and after the introductory period.

In the case of employee termination, the employee will receive their accrued pay in accordance with all federal, state and local laws. All leave accrued by the employee and not used by the date of resignation, termination, or layoff will be forfeited.

If an employee retires from the TSCD they will be compensated for their sick leave according to the Maryland State Retirement System rules and regulations. Annual Leave, Compensatory Leave and Personal Leave not used by date of Retirement will be forfeited.

If an employee retires from the TSCD in good standing with 30 or more years the District Board may, at their discretion, choose to reimburse them for some or all accumulated vacation leave.

Any employee who terminates employment with the TSCD shall return all files, records, keys, and any other materials that are property of the TSCD.

Employee benefits will be affected by employment termination in the following manner:

- All accrued vested benefits that are due and payable at termination will be paid in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.
- Some benefits may be continued for 1 month after termination at the employee's expense, if the employee elects to do so, such as healthcare coverage, certain conditions apply.
- The employee will be notified of the benefits that may be continued and of the terms, conditions, and limitations of such continuation.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy, direct them to the District Manager.

Working Conditions and Hours

Company Hours

The TSCD is open for business from Monday through Friday 7:00 am to 4:30 pm; except for holidays recognized by the TSCD. The standard work week is 40 hours. ***Should you need to work overtime or adjust your start and end times each week, it must be approved by the District Manager in advance.***

The District Manager will advise employees of their scheduled shift, including starting and ending times. Business needs may necessitate a variation in your starting and ending times as well as in the total hours you may be scheduled to work each day and each week.

Emergency Closing

At times, emergencies such as fires, weather, power failures, and the lack of heat or air conditioning can disrupt company operations. In extreme cases, these circumstances may require the closing of a work facility. The decision to close or delay regular operations will be made by the TSCD Chairman.

When the decision is made to close the office, employees will receive notification via text/email from the District Manager.

For most severe weather events the TSCD will follow the closure or delay times as authorized by the State of Maryland.

Safety

The TSCD is committed to providing a clean, safe, and healthful work environment for its employees. Maintaining a safe work environment, however, requires the continuous cooperation of all employees. The TSCD and all employees must comply with all occupational safety and health standards and regulations established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act and state and local regulations. In addition, all employees are expected to obey safety rules and exercise caution and common sense in all work activities.

Employees must immediately report any unsafe conditions to the District Manager. Employees who violate safety standards; cause hazardous or dangerous situations; or fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

In the case of an accident that results in injury, regardless of how seemingly insignificant the injury may appear, employees must notify the District Manager.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the District Manager.

Security

The purpose of the TSCD's security policy is to protect District assets and to maintain a safe working environment for all employees.

Facility Access

All regular TSCD employees will be issued a key card to gain access to the TSCD facilities. Employees who are issued key cards are responsible for their safekeeping. All lost or stolen key cards must be reported to the District Manager as soon as possible.

Upon separation from the TSCD, and at any other time upon the TSCD 's request, all key cards must be returned to the District Manager.

Closing Procedures

The last employee, or a designated employee, who leaves the office at the end of the business day assumes the responsibility to ensure that: all doors are securely locked and all appliances and lights are turned off with exception of the lights normally left on for security purposes and along with alarming Security System.

Smoking

The TSCD provides a smoke-free environment for its employees, customers, and visitors. Smoking is prohibited throughout the building; however, it is permitted at designated spaces outside of the building. We have adopted this policy because we have a sincere interest in the health of our employees and in maintaining pleasant working conditions.

Meal & Rest Periods

Employees will be granted a 30-minute lunch break each day.

Extra time will be given to employees who are interrupted during their lunch break to answer the phone or assist customers or clients.

It is the responsibility of the District Manager to be sure that the office is covered at all times during the working hours. Employees are required to notify the District Manager or designee when leaving for lunch.

Lactation Breaks

The TSCD accommodates employees who will need to pump during the workday by providing reasonable break time to do so for up to one year after the child's birth. A designated room will be provided for this purpose.

For questions related to this policy, please contact the District Manager.

Employee Conduct

Standards of Conduct

The TSCD's rules and standards of conduct are essential to our productive work environment. As such, employees must familiarize themselves with, and be prepared to follow, the District's rules and standards.

While not intended to be an all-inclusive list, the examples below represent behavior that is considered unacceptable in the workplace. Behaviors such as these, as well as other forms of misconduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment:

- Theft or inappropriate removal/possession of property
- Falsification of timekeeping records or other documents
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illicit drugs in the workplace
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace
- Making maliciously false statements about co-workers
- Threatening, intimidating, coercing, or otherwise interfering with the job performance of fellow employees or visitors
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of company-owned or customer-owned property
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct
- Violation of safety or health rules

- Smoking in the workplace
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Excessive absenteeism or any absence without notice
- Unauthorized use of telephones, computers, or other company-owned equipment on working time. Working time does not include break periods, meal times, or other specified periods during the workday when employees are not engaged in performing their work tasks
- Unauthorized disclosure of any confidential information or non-public proprietary information relating to the District's products, services, customers or processes. Wages and other conditions of employment are not considered to be confidential information.

This policy is not intended to restrict an employee's right to discuss, or act together to improve, wages, benefits and working conditions with co-workers or in any way restrict employees' rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

Other forms of misconduct not listed above may also result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If you have questions regarding the TSCD's standards of conduct, please direct them to the District Manager.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action at the TSCD is intended to fairly and impartially correct behavior and performance problems early on and to prevent reoccurrence.

Disciplinary action may involve any of the following: verbal warning, written warning, suspension with or without pay, and termination of employment, depending on the severity of the problem and the frequency of occurrence. The TSCD reserves the right to administer disciplinary action at its discretion and based upon the circumstances.

The TSCD recognizes that certain types of employee behavior are serious enough to justify termination of employment, without observing other disciplinary action first.

These violations include but are not limited to:

- Workplace violence
- Harassment
- Theft of any kind
- Insubordinate behavior
- Vandalism or destruction of company property
- Use of company equipment and/or company vehicles without prior authorization
- Indiscretion regarding personal work history, skills, or training
- Divulging the TSCD business practices or any other confidential information
- Any misrepresentation of the TSCD to a customer, a prospective customer, the general public, or an employee

Confidentiality

The TSCD takes the protection of Confidential Information very seriously. “Confidential Information” includes, but is not limited to, computer processes, computer programs and codes, customer lists, customer preferences, customers’ personal information, company financial data, marketing strategies, proprietary production processes, research and development strategies, pricing information, business and marketing plans, vendor information, software, databases, and information concerning the creation, acquisition or disposition of products and services.

Confidential Information also includes the District’s intellectual property and information that is not otherwise public. Intellectual property includes, but is not limited to, trade secrets, ideas, discoveries, writings, trademarks, and inventions developed through the course of your employment with the TSCD and as a direct result of your job responsibilities with the TSCD. Wages and other conditions of employment are not considered to be Confidential Information.

To protect such information, employees may not disclose any confidential or non-public proprietary information about the District to any unauthorized individual. If you receive a request for Confidential Information, you should immediately refer the request to the District Manager.

The unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information belonging to the District, and not otherwise available to persons or companies outside of the TSCD, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If you leave the District, you may not disclose or misuse any Confidential Information.

This policy is not intended to restrict an employee’s right to discuss, or act together to improve, wages, benefits, and working conditions with co-workers or in any way restrict employees’ rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the District Manager.

Computer, E-mail & Internet Usage

The TSCD strives to maintain a workplace free of discrimination and harassment. Therefore, the TSCD prohibits the use of the District’s electronic communications systems (ECS) for bullying, harassing, discriminating, or engaging in other unlawful misconduct, in violation of the District’s policy against discrimination and harassment.

Respect all copyright and other intellectual property laws. For the District’s protection as well as your own, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright, fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, trademarks and other intellectual property, including the District’s own copyrights, trademarks and brands. Employees are also responsible for ensuring that, when sending any material over the Internet, they have the appropriate distribution rights.

The following behaviors are examples of previously stated or additional actions and activities under this policy that are prohibited:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images about coworkers, supervisors or the District that violate the District's policy against discrimination and harassment.
- Pirating or downloading District-owned software without permission.
- Sending or posting the District's confidential material, trade secrets, or non-public proprietary information outside the District. Wages and other conditions of employment are not considered confidential material.
- Violating copyright laws and failing to observe licensing agreements.
- Participating in the viewing or exchange of pornography or obscene materials.
- Sending or posting messages that threaten, intimidate, coerce, or otherwise interfere with the job performance of fellow employees.
- Attempting to break into the computer system of another organization or person.
- Refusing to cooperate with the security investigation.
- Using the internet for gambling or any illegal activities.
- Sending or posting messages that disparage another organization's products or services.
- Passing off personal vies as representing those of the TSCD.
- Using social media on TSCD computer unrelated to job duties

Computer hardware, software, electronic mail, internet connections, and all other computer, data storage or ECS provided by the TSCD are the property of the TSCD. Employees have no right of personal privacy when using the TSCD's ECS. To ensure productivity of employees, compliance with this policy and with all applicable laws, including harassment and anti-discrimination laws, computer, e-mail and internet usage may be monitored.

The TSCD employees are subject to the computer usage rules and regulations of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service along with any other agency owned computers they may use. Anyone violating the computer rules and regulations of these agencies will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

This policy is not intended to restrict and employee's right to discuss, or act together to improve, wages, benefits and working conditions with co-workers or in any way restrict employees' rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Questions or concerns related to this policy should be directed to the District Manager.

Telephone Usage

The TSCD telephones are intended for the sole use of conducting company business. Personal use of District's telephones during business hours is prohibited except in emergencies. Individually owned cell phones are permitted when needed to conduct work. In addition, long distance phone calls which are not strictly business-related are expressly prohibited.

Any employee found in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Company Supplies

Only authorized persons may purchase supplies in the name of the TSCD. No employee whose regular duties do not include purchasing shall incur any expense on behalf of the TSCD or bind the TSCD by any promise or representation without prior approval.

Personal Appearance

The purpose of the TSCD's personal appearance policy is to ensure safe and sanitary working conditions and that all employees present a professional image. During business hours or when representing the TSCD, employees are expected to dress and groom themselves according to the requirements of their positions. All employees must wear appropriate clothing (business casual), be well groomed, and observe high standards of personal hygiene.

- Shorts are not allowed.
- Clothes should not have any holes or tears larger than a dime.
- Clothing with stains is not permitted.
- Shoes must be closed toe when in the field.
- Athletic pants are not permitted.

It is never appropriate to wear stained, wrinkled, frayed, or revealing clothing to the workplace. Employees are urged to use their discretion when determining what is appropriate to wear to work. Employees who wear inappropriate attire to work will be sent home to change their clothing. Time away from the office to change will be charged to annual or comp leave. If no leave is available, then the employee will be on time off without pay while away from the office.

Questions regarding appropriate workplace attire should be directed to the District Manager.

The dress policy is subject to change at the request of the TSCD Supervisors.

Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment

The TSCD is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect. The TSCD expressly prohibits discrimination and all forms of employee harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, military or veteran status, or status in any group protected by state or local law.

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by law. For purposes of this policy sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Unwelcome sexual advances (either verbal or physical), requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: (1) submission to such

conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; (2) submission or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for making employment decisions; or, (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. These behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors.
- Sexual or derogatory jokes, comments, or innuendo
- Unwelcomed physical interaction
- Insulting or obscene comments or gestures
- Offensive email, voicemail, or text messages
- Suggestive or sexually explicit posters, calendars, photographs, graffiti, or cartoons
- Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances.
- Visual conduct that includes leering, making sexual gestures, or displaying of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons or posters.
- Verbal sexual advances or propositions.
- Physical conduct that includes touching, assaulting, or impeding or blocking movements
- Any other visual, verbal, or physical conduct or behavior deemed inappropriate by the TSCD.

Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited.

Complaint Procedure:

The TSCD strongly encourages the reporting of all instances of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. If you believe you have experienced or witnessed harassment or discrimination based on sex, race, national origin, disability, or another factor, promptly report the incident to your District Manager. If you believe it would be inappropriate to discuss the matter with the District Manager, you may bypass the District Manager and report it directly to the Chairman of the Board.

Any reported allegations of harassment or discrimination will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and impartially.

Any employee found to be engaged in any form of sexual or other unlawful harassment may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Retaliation Prohibited:

The TSCD expressly prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or assists in investigating such charges. Any form of retaliation is considered a direct violation of this policy and, like discrimination or harassment itself, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

The TSCD is committed to maintaining a workplace free of substance abuse. No employee is allowed to consume, possess, sell, purchase, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs on any property owned by or leased on behalf of the TSCD, or in any vehicle owned or leased on behalf of the TSCD.

The use of over-the-counter drugs and legally prescribed drugs is permitted as long as they are used in the manner for which they were prescribed and provided that such use does not hinder an employee's ability to safely perform his or her job. Employees should inform the District Manager if they believe their medication will impair their job performance, safety or the safety of others, or if they believe they need a reasonable accommodation when using such medication.

The TSCD will not tolerate employees who report for duty while impaired by the use of alcohol or drugs. All employees should report evidence of alcohol or drug abuse to the District Manager immediately. In cases in which the use of alcohol or drugs creates an imminent threat to the safety of persons or property, employees are required to report the violation. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

As a part of our effort to maintain a workplace free of substance abuse, TSCD employees may be asked to submit to a medical examination and/or clinical testing for the presence of alcohol and/or drugs. Within the limits of federal, state, and local laws, the TSCD reserves the right to examine and test for drugs and alcohol at our discretion.

As a condition of your employment with the TSCD, employees must comply with this Substance Abuse Policy. Be advised that no part of the Substance Abuse Policy shall be construed to alter or amend the at-will employment relationship between the TSCD and its employees.

Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Personal Property

Employees should use their discretion when bringing personal property into the workplace. The TSCD assumes no risk for any loss or damage to personal property.

Additionally, employees may not possess or display any property that may be viewed as inappropriate or offensive on the TSCD premises.

Workplace Violence

The TSCD strictly prohibits workplace violence, including any act of intimidation, threat, harassment, physical violence, verbal abuse, aggression or coercion against a coworker, vendor, customer, or visitor.

Prohibited actions, include, but are not limited to the following examples:

- Physically injuring another person

- Threatening to injure another person
- Engaging in behavior that subjects another person to emotional distress
- Using obscene, abusive or threatening language or gestures
- Bringing an unauthorized firearm or other weapon onto District property or property leased by the District
- Threatening to use or using a weapon while on company premises, on company-related business, or during job-related functions
- Intentionally damaging property

All threats or acts of violence should be reported immediately to the District Manager. Employees should warn the District Manager of any suspicious workplace activity that they observe or that appears problematic. Employee reports made pursuant to this policy will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. The TSCD will not tolerate any form of retaliation against any employee for making a report under this policy.

The TSCD will take prompt remedial action, up to and including immediate termination, against any employee found to have engaged in threatening behavior or acts of violence.

Use of Company Property

Company property refers to anything owned by the TSCD: physical, electronic, intellectual, or otherwise. The use of District property is for business necessity only.

When materials or equipment are assigned to an employee for District business, it is the employee's responsibility to see that the equipment is used properly and cared for properly. However, at all times, equipment assigned to the employee remains the property of the District and is subject to reassignment and/or use by the District without prior notice or approval of the employee. This includes, but is not limited to, computer equipment and data stored thereon, voice mail, records and employee files.

The TSCD has created specific guidelines regarding the use of District equipment. Below is a list of employee responsibilities and limitations in regard to District property.

Personal use of the TSCD Property:

District property is not permitted to be taken from the premises without proper written authority from the District Manager.

TSCD Tools:

All necessary tools are furnished to employees in order to assist them in their required duties. Each employee is, in turn, responsible for these tools. Tools damaged or stolen as a result of an employee's negligence will, to the extent permitted by federal, state and local law, be charged to the employee.

Care of TSCD Property:

Office areas should be kept neat and orderly and all equipment should be well-maintained. The theft or misappropriation of unauthorized removal, possession, or use of District property or equipment is expressly prohibited.

Any action in contradiction to the guidelines set herein will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Employee Benefits

Paid Time Off (PTO)

For all benefits regarding full-time positions, check with District Manager.

INCLEMENT WEATHER: The District follows the closures of the Maryland State Government. If the State of Maryland announces that its offices are to remain closed due to inclement weather, employees are not required to report for work and will be compensated at their regular rate of pay for normal scheduled hours that day. If an employee is already on approved leave he or she will still be charged leave as scheduled.

Due to inclement weather during the regular scheduled work day District employees may be sent home early with pay at the discretion of the District Board Chairman.

LIBERAL LEAVE: The District follows the decision of the Maryland State Government to enact Liberal Leave. If the State of Maryland announces that its employees are on Liberal leave due to inclement weather, employees are expected to report within two (2) hours of their normal start time. No leave will be charged to the employee for these two (2) hours. If the employee chooses not to come to work at all then they must have adequate leave available to cover the time taken beyond the first two hours of their shift. ONLY annual, personal, or comp time may be taken during liberal leave. If an employee does not have leave then they are expected to report to work within two (2) hours of their normal starting time or take leave without pay. Employees must inform the District Manager of their plans as soon as possible.

If the State of Maryland announces that offices will be open at a certain time, then the District will also open at the appointed time. For example: If the State of Maryland is closed until 10:00 then each employee is expected to arrive by then and will be paid their regular schedule for time off.

OTHER NOTES: Work-related accidents and illness are covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance, pursuant to the requirements of the laws in the state in which the TSCD operates. The PTO policy outlined above does not apply to those illnesses or injuries that are covered by an applicable Workers' Compensation policy.

Health Insurance

The TSCD's health insurance benefits are intended to protect you from financial loss resulting from hospital, surgical, or other health-related expenses.

Eligible permanent employees may elect to begin health insurance benefits for themselves pending health insurance eligibility requirements.

Eligible grant funded employees may elect to begin health insurance benefits for them only. Grant funded employee family members are NOT eligible for health insurance due to the nature of the funding provided for these positions.

For details on the specific health insurance plans available through the TSCD, contact the District Manager. We encourage both you and your family, if eligible, to review the plan's Summary Plan Description (SPD) materials carefully.

Workers' Compensation

Employees who are injured on the job at the TSCD are eligible for Workers' Compensation benefits. Such benefits are provided at no cost to employees and cover any injury or illness sustained in the course of employment that requires medical treatment.

Employees who sustain work-related injuries or illnesses must notify the District Manager immediately so that the TSCD can notify the workers' compensation insurance carrier as soon as possible.

Lost time or medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident or injury which occurred while an employee was on the job will be compensated for in accordance with workers' compensation laws. This protection is paid for in full by the TSCD. No premium is charged for this coverage and no individual enrollment is required. The TSCD will provide medical care and a portion of lost wages through our insurance carrier.

Holidays

The TSCD observes the following paid holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- General Election Day
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- American Indian Heritage Day

- Christmas Day

The TSCD follows the State of Maryland holiday schedule. Holidays may change according to changes made by the State of Maryland.

Jury Duty

The TSCD encourages employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities when called upon to serve as a juror. Employees must provide the District Manager with a copy of their jury summons as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made to accommodate their absence if necessary. Either the TSCD or the employee may request an excuse from jury duty if it is determined that the employee's absence would create serious operational difficulties.

Employees on jury duty must report to work on workdays, or parts of workdays, when they are not required to serve.

Employees serving on jury duty will be paid their regular salary while serving and not charged leave. However, if the employee is dismissed from jury duty and wishes not to return to work for the remainder of their shift then leave must be used accordingly. The employee must have approval from the District Manager to take this leave.

Employees receiving payment for jury duty may keep the payment for completing their civic duty.

Military Leave

The TSCD proudly grants employees time off of work for service in the uniformed services in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

Military Leave is only applicable to employees in the Reserves for any Branch.

All employees requesting time off for military service must provide advance notice of military service to the District Manager, unless military necessity prevents such notice, or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable. Continuation of health insurance benefits is available during military leave subject to the terms and conditions of the group health plan and applicable law.

Employees are eligible for re-employment for up to five (5) years from the date their military leave began. The period an individual has to make application for reemployment or report back to work after military service is based on time spent on military duty. For service of less than 31 days, the service member must return at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work period on the first full day after release from service, taking into account safe travel home plus an eight-hour rest period. For service of more than 30 days but less than 181 days, the service member must submit an application for reemployment within 14 days of release from service.

For service of more than 180 days, an application for reemployment must be submitted within 90 days of release from service.

Employees who qualify for re-employment will return to active employment at a pay level and status equal to that which they would have attained had they not entered military service. They will be treated as though they were continuously employed for purposes of determining benefits based on length of service.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the District Manager.

Timekeeping and Payroll

Attendance and Punctuality

Absenteeism and tardiness place an undue burden on other employees and on the District. The TSCD expects regular attendance and punctuality from all employees. This means being in the work place, ready to work, at your scheduled start time each day and completing your entire shift. Employees are also expected to return from scheduled breaks and meal periods on time.

All time off must be requested in advance. If an employee is unexpectedly unable to report for work for any reason, or if you will be late for any reason, you must notify the District Manager as early as possible and always within an hour of your scheduled starting time. Calling or texting the District Manager is acceptable. If the District Manager does not respond within an hour of the original text that was sent by the employee, it is the employees' responsibility to call and verify that the message has been received. Employees, who are going to be absent for more than one day, should contact the District Manager each day with notification that they will be absent. If an employee has a doctor's note excusing them for work for a period of time, then the employee is not required to call in each day but to notify the District Manager of their return date. The TSCD reserves the right to ask for a physician's statement in the event of a long-term illness (3 consecutive days), or multiple illnesses or injuries.

If an employee fails to notify the District Manager after three (3) consecutive days of absence, the TSCD will presume that the employee has voluntarily resigned, and the employee will be removed from payroll. The TSCD will review any extenuating circumstances presented by the employee that may have prevented him/her from calling in before being removed from payroll.

If an illness or emergency occurs during work hours, employees should notify the District Manager. Employees must also notify the District Manager at least one day in advance of known absences for medical or dental appointments.

The TSCD considers consistent attendance and punctuality to be the foundation for excellent performance. Should undue or recurrent absence and tardiness become apparent, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

This policy is not intended to restrict an employee's right to discuss, or act together to improve, wages, benefits and working conditions with co-workers or in any way restrict employees' rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

Timekeeping

It is the agency's policy to comply with applicable laws that require records to be maintained of the hours worked by our employees. Every employee is responsible for accurately recording time worked.

The TSCD strictly prohibits non-exempt employees from working off the clock for any reason. All time spent working must be logged and accounted for; this includes time spent using electronic devices for work-related purposes.

Vacation days, sick days, holidays, and absences for jury duty, funeral leave or military training must be specifically recorded by all employees.

All employees must use a paper timesheet to record hours worked. It is the responsibility of all employees to submit and approve their time records within 2 days after the end of each pay period.

Altering, falsifying, tampering with time records, or recording time on another employee's time record may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Paydays

The TSCD employees are paid on a biweekly basis. In the event that a regularly scheduled payday falls on a holiday, employees will be paid on the day preceding the holiday, unless otherwise required by state law.

All employees of the District are required to have direct deposit after the first paycheck.

In the event of employee termination, the employee will receive their accrued pay in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

Payroll Deductions

The TSCD makes deductions from employee pay only in circumstances permitted by applicable law. This includes, but is not limited to, mandatory deductions for income tax withholding and Social Security and Medicare contributions as well as voluntary deductions for health insurance premiums and other related contributions.

All requests for changes in voluntary deductions, such as checking accounts or savings accounts, must be made in writing to the District Manager. This will insure the change requests are understood and made accordingly.

If you believe that an improper deduction has been made from your pay, raise the issue with the District Manager immediately. The TSCD will promptly investigate. If the investigation reveals that you were subjected to an improper deduction from pay, you will be reimbursed promptly.

I, _____, have received the
Talbot Soil Conservation District Employee's Manual effective 11/1/2019 and I agree to follow
all the rules and regulations regarding employment.

Employee Signature

Date

Shawn D. Smith, Talbot SCD Manager

Date