



Section 7: HEALTH & SAFETY

	Page
7.1 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005	2
7.2 Employee Assistance Programme	3
7.3 Emergency Evacuation Procedure	3
7.4 Access to Workplace Buildings	3
7.5 Safe Use of Equipment	4
7.6 Work Related Social Activities	4
7.7 Mobile Phone Policy	4

7.1 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005

Note

The Parent Safety Statement for North Tipperary VEC, reflecting the current legislative environment including the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, has been developed and is available in all schools and centres throughout the organisation.

Introduction

Arising from the enactment of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, which places a range of duties on employers, employees and others, e.g. manufacturers, designers, suppliers and property owners whose activities may impact on workplace health and safety, North Tipperary VEC has established a representative Health and Safety Working Group in 2009.

Under the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare Act, 2005, the purpose of this Working Group is to embed health and safety in every aspect of the activities of North Tipperary VEC as an organisation.

The Health and Safety Working Group will enhance health and safety throughout the organisation and will co-operate with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in drafting a strategic plan for further embedding health and safety within all aspects of the Committee's services.

Composition

The Health and Safety sub-committee will comprise representatives of:

- Committee's Schools and Colleges
- Adult Education Services Staff
- Maintenance and Support Services

The objective of North Tipperary VEC is to provide a safe place of work for all of its employees and all of those affected by its activities. North Tipperary VEC, through its Health and Safety Working Group, will ensure continued priority of health and safety by developing a comprehensive Safety Management Programme.

Safety Management Programme

The Health and Safety Working Group has devised a safety management programme with the following elements:

1. Monitor annual safety audits of all workplaces to identify hazards, assess risks and control the hazards where necessary and appropriate.
2. Identify training needs and provide training where necessary and appropriate.
3. Ensure employee consultation and distribution of necessary information on safety, health and welfare matters.

-
4. Ensure adequate employee co-operation in order to achieve the success of the programme.
 5. Ensure regular revision of the programme as necessary.
 6. Provide proposals regarding funding related to H&S requirements to Senior Managers.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007

The Health and Safety Working Group acting on behalf of North Tipperary VEC will also address the requirements of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations 2007 and provide directions regarding the incorporation of these regulations into every aspect of the Committee's Safety Management Policy and Programme.

7.2 Employee Assistance Programme

Introduction

We can all experience difficulties which impact on our performance at work or face difficulties in our lives that make it difficult for us to do our jobs to the best of our ability. Such difficulties may include, but are not limited to:

- Family, Emotional or Relationship Difficulties, Bereavement
- Work related Stress, Ill Health, Addictions,
- Financial or Legal.

North Tipperary VEC is currently facilitating the provision of the Employee Assistance Programme which was established nationally for Teachers and which is being run by VHI Corporate Solutions on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. It is also exploring the provision of this service to all NTVEC staff.

Promotion of Health and Well Being Activities

North Tipperary VEC has identified the promotion of health and wellbeing of all staff in its Education Plan 2006 - 2010 and supports the work undertaken by the Health Service Executive in the promotion of activities which positively affect the health and wellbeing of its employees, e.g. Healthy Eating, fitness, smoking cessation, stress in the workplace, back care, first aid, etc.

7.3 Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Like North Tipperary VEC Administration Offices, all Schools and Centres have an evacuation procedure so that in the event of any emergency, employees, visitors, and students can be evacuated in a quick and safe manner. All employees will be informed of the evacuation procedure during their health and safety training. All employees must adhere to the procedure and obey any orders given by appointed fire officers. Individual Schools and Centres will address the development, communication, and implementation of emergency evacuation procedures in each location.

7.4 Access to Workplace Buildings

Each member of the staff of North Tipperary VEC is required to familiarise themselves with the particular rules and local practices, in Schools, Centres, and Administration Offices, regarding the control of access to workplace buildings and access systems and procedures for staff and students to ensure authorised only access to work places, buildings, and to maintain a safe and secure working environment.

7.5 Safe Use of Equipment

A wide range of equipment is available to the Committee's staff to facilitate them in their daily work and execution of their duties. It is the responsibility of each staff member to use any such equipment for its intended purpose only and in accordance with the instructions and any training provided.

From time to time, staff may be provided with equipment which is sometimes used outside the School/College/Centre to which they are assigned, e.g. laptops, projectors, digital cameras and camcorders. On such occasions, staff concerned are responsible for any such items of equipment and safe return of same to the School/College/Centre in question. Such items of equipment must only be used for business directly related to the activities of North Tipperary VEC, and in accordance with the policies which govern these activities.

7.6 Work Related Social Activities

North Tipperary VEC recognises that its employees are its most valuable resource, as such the Committee wish to encourage positive working relationships among employees at all times.

Work related social events can be particularly enjoyable and are a way of developing better working relationships. Christmas parties and other social functions which originate as part of workplace association are sufficiently work related to come within a range of legislation including:

- Occupational Health and Safety legislation.
- A range of anti-discrimination legislation, including provision for dealing with sexual and racial harassment.
- Criminal code, including assault, either of a physical or verbal nature.

As with the normal workplace, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure employee health and safety and to provide an environment free from harassment and discrimination.

Employees are reminded that functions (such as Christmas functions) are considered an extension of the workplace, so the same rules apply. Even when the party is held off site there are expectations of appropriate behaviour which respects the dignity of others.

Employees have a responsibility to take reasonable precautions for their own health and safety and that of others. They are also expected to behave in such a way that the workplace is free from harassment and other abusive behaviour.

Unfortunately, celebrations particularly during festive periods are all too often marred by the news of injuries or fatal road traffic collisions. Where alcohol is served at work related social functions, each member of staff is advised to leave his/her car at home, book a taxi, arrange a lift or organise a designated driver scheme with friends or family.

7.7 Mobile Phones Acquisition and Usage Policy

Mobile Phones are an important communications tool that can improve the availability, and increase the productivity of the North Tipperary VEC's mobile workers who may not always have access to their landline. As such they should be used in an efficient, lawful, safe and ethical manner.

North Tipperary V.E.C. staff are accountable for appropriate use of their VEC issue mobile and should abide by this Mobile Phones Acquisition and Usage Policy.

1. Provision/Procurement of Mobile Phones

At the request of School Principals/Adult Education Officers/Youthreach Coordinators/STTC Directors/Department and Function Heads, North Tipperary V.E.C. provides a mobile for specific posts. These consist of predominantly handheld phones. Mobile phones may only be purchased through the Finance section. The recipient of a mobile phone will be required to sign a receipt for the relevant equipment.

2. Service Provision

All North Tipperary V.E.C. mobile phones are on a single corporate contract negotiated and administered centrally by North Tipperary V.E.C, Finance Department. All purchase negotiation, replacement and other matters relating to mobile phones will be carried out by the Committee's Finance Section.

Where a service needs adjustment, checking or advice, requests should be submitted to the Finance Section via your Line Manager. In relation to the day-to-day care and use of phones, the individual users are responsible. This may be applied in relation to the remaining provisions of this policy.

3. Usage

All users must abide by the terms of this Mobile Phone Policy.

North Tipperary V.E.C. Mobile Phones are not to be used for individual "business" or private matters related to personal income generating activities.

Access to mobile phones is intended for Committee purposes only. While reasonable making and taking of personal calls is not strictly prohibited, staff are encouraged to keep this to a minimum level. The Committee reserves the right to monitor the use of mobile phones.

Mobile phones are provided to staff members for committee business. Personal calls from such phones are permitted but the calls must be paid for by the staff member.

4. Accountability

Mobile Phone access is provided for officially approved purposes only i.e. Committee business and limited personal use (as defined in the Call Charges section of this policy).

Mobile Phone usage should be able to withstand public scrutiny and/or disclosure. Staff should not use the Mobile Phones in a way that could defame, harass, abuse or offend individuals or organisations.

North Tipperary V.E.C. reserves the right to audit any or all Committee funded Mobile Phone usage. North Tipperary V.E.C. staff may be called upon to explain their use of Committee funded Mobile Phones.

5. Call Charges

All personal call charges will be paid by the user.

All business call charges will be paid by North Tipperary V.E.C.

All North Tipperary V.E.C. phone accounts are monitored and users shall be responsible for the use and provide an explanation of call charges if requested. The allocation of costs will be to the School/Centre or Service in which the member of staff is currently working, unless otherwise specified and authorised.

6. Security

Staff issued with a mobile phone purchased by North Tipperary V.E.C. must ensure the security of the phone (and any allied equipment) at all times. The following items should be noted:

- i. Should a mobile phone be lost or stolen, the user should contact directly the service provider to report the theft in order to block the number and handset. The matter should then be reported to your Line Manager.
- ii. There are a number of built in protection mechanisms that the user should apply in the day to day operation of the mobile phone:
 - a. Activate the keypad lock.
 - b. A PIN code must be used to lock the phone so that if the phone is subsequently stolen or lost a PIN code must be used to unlock the phone.
- iii. Mobile phones should not be left in unattended vehicles.
- iv. While in the office, store the phone and associated equipment with due care. If lending the phone to other members of staff, make a record of when and to whom.

7. Procedure for Upgrade

Upgrades can only be initiated through existing authorised users. Requests submitted to your Line Manager will be evaluated and where necessary the phone will be upgraded in accordance with the provisions of our contract. It should be noted that there must be a justifiable business cause to warrant an upgrade. All unused mobile phones should be surrendered to the Finance Section.

8. Use of Personal Mobile Phones

Personal mobile phones should not normally be used to make business calls. North Tipperary V.E.C. does not undertake to refund any business calls made in this way. Personal mobile phones should be kept on silent mode during working hours and only used in exceptional circumstances. Recording of images/pictures on mobile phones during working hours is not permitted.

9. Courtesy

As a matter of professional courtesy, we advise mobile phone users to either turn off their phone or divert it to voicemail or another number, or set the phone into "silent mode" during meetings, training courses, seminars etc. In exceptional

circumstances, where it becomes necessary to take a business call, it is courteous to inform colleagues that an urgent call is expected.

10. Use of Mobile Phones whilst driving

It is illegal to use mobile phones whilst driving.

11. Voice-Mail

Your Voicemail should be personalised with a message.

12. Health

There has been considerable speculation in the press regarding the possible damaging effects on health, as a result of prolonged use of mobile telephones. To date there is no clear evidence to support these claims.

- i. The Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (The Stewart Report) reported in May 2000 that:

"...The balance of the evidence available does not suggest that RF (Radio Frequency) radiation from mobile phones or base stations causes cancer or other brain diseases. However, there is now evidence that effects on biological functions, including those of the brain, may be induced by RF radiation at levels comparable to those associated with the use of mobile telephones. There is, as yet, no evidence that these biological effects constitute a health hazard, but at present only limited data is available. This is one reason why we recommend a precautionary approach."
- ii. There has been some suggestion that using mobile phones via a "hands free kit" might reduce the amount of radiation delivered to the head. In two recent studies that used differing methodologies, one indicated that this was not the case, whilst the other indicated the use of such kits was beneficial. Some research has also indicated that the use of mobile phones in hands free mode by drivers does not reduce the risk of an accident.
- iii. Suggested Precautions
 - a. If using a mobile telephone, it may be advisable to avoid continued use for prolonged periods.
 - b. The use of an approved hands-free set.
- iv. The intention of these precautions is to advise only, so that mobile phone users can make their own informed decisions.