

NEEA Standards of Business Conduct



Jan 7, 2013

We expect all employees to observe the highest standards of professionalism at all times, to comply with all laws applicable to our business whenever conducted, and to treat others in the workplace with dignity and respect.

Laws and Ethics

We have a policy of strict compliance with all laws, which are applicable to our business, whenever conducted. Compliance with the law means not only observing the law, but also conducting our business affairs so that we will deserve and receive recognition as a law-abiding organization. You should never assume that our interest requires some other course of conduct. Moreover, no one has the authority to give any order or direction that would result in a violation of this policy.

In some instances, laws and regulations are ambiguous and difficult to interpret. In such cases, you should seek advice in order to assure that you are in compliance with this policy and are observing all applicable laws and regulations. If you have need for such advice or counsel, contact your Manager, a NEEA Director, or the Executive Director. If for some reason an employee feels he/she is unable to speak with a member of NEEA, he/she is encouraged to contact the ethics line. The ethics line is an outside agency set up to assist employees in maintaining confidentiality in reporting any perceived acts of ethics and/or law violations.

Whistle Blowing

As defined by this policy, a whistleblower is an employee who reports an activity that may be considered illegal or dishonest to one or more of the parties specified in this handbook. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity, or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate organizational officials are charged with these responsibilities.

Examples of illegal or dishonest activities are violations of federal, state, or local laws, billing for services not performed, or for goods not delivered, and other fraudulent financial reporting.

Whistleblower protections are provided in two important areas, confidentiality and against retaliation. Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law, and to provide accused individuals their legal rights of defense. NEEA will not retaliate against a whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to, protection from retaliation in the form of an adverse employment action such as termination, compensation decreases, or poor work assignments and threats of

physical harm. Any whistleblower who believes that he/she is being retaliated against must contact the Executive Director immediately. The right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated.

All reports of illegal and dishonest activities can be submitted to the Executive Director who is responsible for investigating and coordinating corrective action. If an employee is unable to speak to the Executive Director, he/she is encouraged to utilize the ethics line. Employees with any questions regarding this policy should contact the Executive Director. Employees must exercise sound judgment to avoid baseless allegations. An employee who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Conflicts of Interest

Employees are expected to avoid conflicts of interest at all times. NEEA recognizes an employee's right to engage in activities outside his/her employment which are of a private nature and unrelated to organizational business. A conflict of interest occurs when an employee's personal or financial interests interfere with, or appear to interfere with, his/her duties and responsibilities to NEEA.

Sometimes conflicts of interest will develop accidentally or unexpectedly. If this happens, any employee having knowledge of the situation must report the matter directly to his/her Manager or the Executive Director.

Employees are also discouraged from accepting meals or other gifts from salespeople, vendors, suppliers, or any other solicitors. It is NEEA's policy that any type of gift or promotional item with a value greater than \$50 from an outside person or entity cannot be accepted.

Working Outside of NEEA

NEEA requires approval before accepting outside employment, even if on a part-time, or temporary basis. Your manager will need to ensure that there is no conflict of interest with NEEA or your current position and that all duties and responsibilities of NEEA are being performed. An employee may not perform any duties related to an outside job during his/her regular working hours or during the additional time that they will need to fulfill the responsibilities of the position; nor will an employee use NEEA facilities, equipment or materials in performing outside work. Outside employment obligations will not constitute an excusable absence from NEEA meetings, or any other activity which the NEEA employee is expected to attend.

Employment of Family Members

Employees' relatives may apply for employment with NEEA and will be given equal consideration with all applicants. NEEA will not employ an employee's family member,

nor permit continued employment of family members, where such employment would not reflect reasonable business practice. In particular, it is not acceptable for an employee to report to or supervise a family member. Employment of family members must be approved in advance by the Executive Director.

Further, such relatives will not be hired or transferred into positions where they have access to sensitive information regarding a close family member, or where there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

For the purposes of this handbook section, “family” is defined to include spouse, domestic partner, children, parents, brothers, sisters and dependents, whether or not living in the same household. The definition also includes all other relatives who live in the same household and persons who live together in non-marital, non-related arrangements.

Confidentiality

As an employee of NEEA, you may have access to information that is private and/or confidential. You may have access to, or overhear, information about another employee or one of the many business partners of NEEA. Care must be taken to preserve confidentiality. Other than NEEA work products developed for public dissemination, matters or information (oral or printed) that relate to NEEA’s employees or operations may not be discussed or disseminated outside NEEA. Removal or personal use of any records, reports, data, membership lists, or other confidential information, except for public work products, in any form, from NEEA’s premises is strictly prohibited without the express written consent of the Executive Director. Failure to adhere to this policy of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, at the sole discretion of NEEA.

Representing NEEA to the Media

The Executive Director, or the Director of Marketing and Evaluation, are the only individuals authorized to speak to the media regarding NEEA. An exception may be made if the Executive Director specifically designates another employee to speak to the media. Employees will be expected to handle any media inquiries regarding NEEA in a professional manner.

When speaking as a representative of NEEA, an employee shall make every effort to accurately state NEEA’s position on a given topic. If NEEA’s position on a topic is not known at the time the statement is requested, the employee should make no statement on that issue. Employees shall exercise discretion to ensure that their personal opinions or social views are not interpreted as representing the views of NEEA. No commitment for action, association, or expenditure by NEEA shall be made without the express prior consent of the Executive Director.

Political Activities

Individual employees may choose to participate in the political process. However, no influence shall be exerted by any employee on another employee to make any personal political contribution, or to engage in any political activity. No political activities are to be conducted during work hours or on NEEA property.

Solicitation for Causes or Groups

While our workplace may provide an attractive forum for other activities, our primary responsibility is the performance of all NEEA functions. In order to prevent interference with work and inconvenience to other employees, solicitation for any cause during work time is not permitted. Distribution of literature, except for technical journals and trade publications, in any work area of NEEA is also not permitted. Work time does not include lunch breaks or paid rest breaks if all involved employees are on such a break.

The use of NEEA's computer system or e-mail system to solicit employees or to distribute outside literature, other than technical information, is expressly prohibited. Solicitation includes such activities as requests for signatures, contributions for charities, support of political or other organized activities, merchandise purchases and/or requests for donations.

We maintain bulletin boards on the premises that may be used by employees for notices, announcements, etc. including charitable causes. Any requests for signatures, etc., are expected to take place off organization hours with the prior approval of the Executive Director. Human Resources must review and approve all materials before they are placed on the bulletin board. Any questions concerning the implementation of this policy should be directed to the Executive Director.

Workplace Violence

NEEA provides a safe workplace for all employees. To ensure a safe workplace and to reduce the risk of violence, all employees should review and understand all provisions of this workplace violence policy. NEEA does not tolerate acts of workplace violence committed by or against employees. NEEA strictly prohibits employees from making threats or engaging in violent acts. Any possible indication of violence in the workplace must be reported immediately to any member of the management staff. Following is a sample list of conduct that will not be tolerated, to serve as a reference point:

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Injuring another person physically;
- Engaging in behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury in another person;
- Engaging in behavior that subjects another individual to extreme emotional distress;
- Possessing, brandishing, or using a weapon while on Alliance premises or engaged in NEEA business;
- Damaging property intentionally;
- Threatening to injure an individual or damage property; and

- Committing injurious acts motivated by, or related to, domestic violence, or sexual harassment.

Zero Tolerance

NEEA is committed to creating a respectful, courteous work environment free of discrimination and harassment of any kind. We believe that our objectives can best be achieved by utilizing all of the human resources available to the fullest extent possible. The following section addresses prohibited conduct, including discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, and explains the steps you should take if you believe discrimination or harassment has occurred or may occur.

Prohibited Conduct

NEEA expressly prohibits any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, mental or physical disability, medical condition, veteran status, or other protected status in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws. NEEA has zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or harassment directed towards any employee, family member, visitor, vendor, or other person you may come into contact with through your employment with NEEA. We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent such actions. Not only is discrimination and harassment a breach of organizational policy, but it may also be a violation of state and/or federal law. In addition to any disciplinary action NEEA may take (up to and including termination of employment), offenders may also be personally liable for any legal and monetary damages. NEEA will not pay damages assessed personally against an employee.

Defining Harassment

In general, prohibited harassment includes comments and behaviors that are directed against an individual based on protected status, qualities, and/or attributes. Harassment is defined as (1) being unwelcome; (2) having the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; and (3) being sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of employment for the targeted individual.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unlawful employment discrimination based on one's sex. There are two types of sexual harassment. The first, Quid Pro Quo Sexual Harassment, is defined as a situation where an employer connects employment/job benefits with unwelcome sexual advances, sexual favors, or other physical or verbal sexual contact (e.g., linking promotions or the prevention of adverse outcomes with intimate relations with your employer). The second type, Hostile Work Environment, is harassment that is sufficiently severe enough to create an abusive work environment. This may include exposure to unwanted sexual advances, physical contact, sexual comments and jokes, sexual photographs, or other types of intimidating, hostile, or offensive actions or

behavior.

Sexual harassment is illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Harassment applies whether the person being harassed is a man or woman, or if both the harasser and victim are of the same gender.

Examples of sexual harassment conduct include:

- Unwelcome or unwanted physical advances of a sexual nature, including touching, patting, slapping, pinching, brushing up against, hugging, cornering, kissing, fondling, and any other unacceptable physical contact.
- Requests or demands for sexual favors, consisting of subtle or obvious outcomes that are linked to an individual's employment status.
- Comments, gestures, noises, remarks, or jokes about a person's sexuality or sexual experience (directed at or made in the presence of any employee who indicates or has indicated in any way that such conduct in his or her presence is unwelcome).
- Any other type of sexually oriented behaviors that unreasonably interferes with another individual's work performance.

It should be noted that pleasant, mutually respectful interaction that is acceptable to all individuals is not classified as sexual harassment.

Other Forms of Harassment

Harassment does not have to be sexual in nature to create a hostile environment. Other types of prohibited forms of harassment include:

- Verbal abuse, jokes, and offensive slurs based on religion, race, color, age, medical condition, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or other legally protected status or characteristic.
- Displaying offensive pictures, cartoons, calendars, written jokes, or objects that are demeaning or hostile and are based on religion, race, color, age, medical condition, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or other legally protected status or characteristic.
- Other offensive conduct (e.g., threats, pranks, or vandalism) relating to an individual's religion, race, color, age, medical condition, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or other legally protected status or characteristic, all as defined and protected by applicable law.

Other terminable offenses related to harassment include, but are not limited to the following:

- Knowingly making false allegations of sexual or other harassment.
- Breaking confidentiality when involved in any harassment investigation.

Such behaviors can occur in one-on-one interactions or in group settings. It is impossible to list every action or all language that could be interpreted as harassment. The examples provided above are not a complete list of unacceptable behaviors. You are required to be attentive to others' reactions as well as individual stated requests and preferences, to respect their wishes, and to treat them in a professional manner.

Reporting and Investigating Harassment

Any employee who feels that they have been the subject of harassment (or who has reason to believe that another individual has been the subject of harassment) has the obligation to notify a Manager, an Alliance Director, or the Executive Director immediately. If necessary, employees are encouraged to utilize the ethics line to report such incidences (see Appendix A for contact information.) Employee complaints will be kept confidential as far as reasonably possible, consistent with NEEA's responsibility to investigate the complaint and to take appropriate corrective action.

THE COMPLAINANT SHOULD INCLUDE ALL INFORMATION THAT THE ORGANIZATION REQUESTS, INCLUDING A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT(S), WITNESSES (IF ANY), DATES, AND OTHER INFORMATION CONSIDERED RELEVANT. A PROMPT INVESTIGATION OF THE MATTER WILL BE MADE. ALL COMPLAINTS WILL BE INVESTIGATED AS DISCREETLY AND CONFIDENTIALLY AS POSSIBLE. ALL EMPLOYEES - WHETHER COMPLAINANT, WITNESS, OR ACCUSED - ARE REQUIRED TO BE TRUTHFUL, ACCURATE, AND COOPERATIVE DURING THE INVESTIGATIONS. NO ONE SHOULD BE PRESUMED TO BE IN VIOLATION BECAUSE AN INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED.

Anyone who is found to have engaged in prohibited harassment will be subject to appropriate sanctions, which may include termination of employment, depending on the circumstances. NEEA will communicate its findings to the necessary parties at the conclusion of the investigation.

Role and Responsibilities

All employees are expected to use NEEA's Problem Resolution Policy and to give NEEA an opportunity to resolve problems prior to seeking outside assistance. In addition, employees involved in an investigation are expected to cooperate fully.

Protection Against Retaliation

Neither NEEA's policy nor the law will tolerate any form of retaliation against any employee who opposes discrimination or prohibited harassment, files a complaint, testifies, assists, or participates in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing conducted by a state or federal agency. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, demotion, suspension, failure to hire or consider for hire, failure to give equal consideration in making employment decisions, failure to make impartial employment recommendations, adversely affecting working conditions, or otherwise denying any employment benefit to an individual. Any employee who engages in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, as well as possible legal consequences.

Problem Resolution

Here at NEEA, we value the importance of an open and fair method of resolving problems and answering questions. Our problem resolution procedure involves a threestep process. Terminations are not subject to review under this policy.

Step 1: We encourage you to bring up any questions or concerns you have about terms or conditions of employment. Usually, the place to start in answering a question or resolving a concern is with your Manager. Your Manager is expected to listen to your question or concern and get back to you with an answer or response, usually within three days of your initial discussion.

Step 2: We recognize that in some cases a question or concern you have may involve your Manager, and you may be reluctant to discuss the situation with that person. If this is the case, or if you are not satisfied with the response provided by your Manager to Step 1, you may contact Human Resources, or the Manager to whom your manager reports. If you are carrying forward an issue first presented by you to your Manager, we ask that you take your second step within five days of when you receive your Manager's response.

Step 3: Should you still be dissatisfied with the Step 2 response you may contact the Executive Director. The Executive Director will review the situation, investigate any further questions, and then get back to you with a decision. We ask that you take the step of contacting the Executive Director within five days of receiving a response from Step 2. The decision of the Executive Director is the final decision and resolution of the concern or matter you raise.

We recognize that not everyone is comfortable presenting a grievance to his/her employer, but we encourage our employees to take advantage of our problem resolution procedure, and we are committed to preventing any retaliation against persons who do so.

Taking the time to ask and answer questions, and state and resolve workplace concerns, makes an important contribution to the overall performance and growth of our organization. Note that this policy does not take the place of NEEA investigating situations where possible harassment and/or discriminations may have occurred. Such investigations will take place under NEEA's Zero Tolerance Policy