



10-Minute Supervisor Trainings

Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission

OCTOBER 2013

PERSONNEL ISSUES

Every conservation district office is manned by one or more office staff. From time to time it is necessary to do some “good housekeeping” and provide what is needed by both the district and employee. Districts are required to follow all applicable state and federal labor laws; however, many employee issues must be decided by only the board. All policies that are made by the board should be reflected in the board’s policy and procedures manual so that the board members and employees can make sure that they understand what is required..

Hiring: When it is time to hire an employee where do you begin?

Each time a new employee is hired, it is important for the board to carefully discuss what is needed in a new employee. Remember to use input from your district conservationist and field representative as they may know more about the day to day requirements of the job.

Some of the topics that need to be discussed include, but are not limited to:

- Compensation (including wages, vacation or sick leave, insurance, retirement, etc.)
- Duties (bookkeeping, education, errands, reporting, coordinating meetings, etc.)
- Office issues (hours, travel, reimbursements, training, etc.)
- Evaluations (probation period, how to evaluate, expectations, etc.)

Now you are ready to advertise, interview and hire. A simple ad with general description needs to be advertised for at least one week in the local paper, radio or on line. You can obtain a sample from your field representative. They can submit a resume, or you can come up with your own application. It is good business to interview at least 3 by the whole board or just the personnel committee.

The probationary period is an important tool for the district. The position may not be right for the person you hired. This gives you the legal opportunity to simply let them go.

Job Descriptions: The requirements of every district change over time. It is important that the expectations of the employees change with those requirements. Every employee should have an up-to-date job description that outlines the goals, duties and expectations for the job and lays out all pay and benefit information.

This is not only good business but is also necessary for any legal situations that may arise. This job description is the supervisors' way to know that the employee is aware of all of the board's expectations. If your job descriptions are older than 3 years or if each of your staff does not have one, your field representative can assist you in updating these.

Evaluations: No matter how satisfied a district is with staff performance, it is still essential from a business and legal standpoint to establish a time each year for employee evaluations. Most districts do this right before they set the budget for the coming year to determine salary or benefit increases. This gives the employee and the employer a time to voice any needs or concerns that are or are not getting addressed.

The time of evaluations also gives the board the chance to update the job description for each employee. The district should never be afraid to check on their employees' performance to make sure that they are meeting the board's expectations. All evaluations should be handled in a professional "businesslike" manner. All issues (both good and bad) should be documented and discussed. This is where a personnel committee can come in handy. A committee made up of 3 or 4 members can take care of issues outside of a full board meeting and update and make recommendations to the board.

Notes:

- Committees cannot make final decisions regarding employees. They make recommendations to the board so that the board as a whole can make decisions.
- Committee meetings are required to be open meetings.
- Executive sessions can be used for hiring, firing, or disciplining an employee – not for evaluations.

When a problem arises: Any business will occasionally encounter an issue with an employee. These issues need to be addressed immediately. The personnel committee or the full board needs to decide how bad the issue is. Smaller infractions, such as tardiness, dress code violations, issues with the public, etc. should be documented in writing with each occurrence. Larger infractions should as discrimination, stealing/embezzlement, violence, etc. should not be tolerated and should be dealt with immediately by the board.

It is important for the board to deal with problems as soon as possible so that the employee can correct their behavior. Poorly performing employees can reflect negatively on the board within the community.

Dismissal – What you should know:

When legally firing an individual, you must have documentation of where you have tried to resolve issues by speaking with the employee or giving them a warning. The things mentioned above that are inexcusable should be handled immediately by firing the employee on the spot and requesting that they leave the grounds with only their personal possessions. As long as it is justified and documented, it is the right of any business to excuse any employees with just reason.

When an employee does leave, there are several things that the board should do immediately. These include requesting keys, changing locks (if necessary), changing passwords, notifying IT of computer changes (if the district has an NRCS computer), notifying the Division of Conservation, etc.