Policy Direction – Disconnecting from Work

Rationale and Relationship to Vision, Mission, and Values

MS Canada is an employer that puts its people first. We understand that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or the working environment, employees may feel obligated to perform their work duties outside their regular working hours. Feeling an inability to disconnect from the job can lead to stress and deterioration of mental and physical health. This policy has been established to support employee wellness, minimize excessive sources of stress, and ensure that employees feel they can disconnect from their work outside their regular working hours.

Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to ensure employees understand their right to disconnect from work outside of their regular working hours. It also provides:

a) Guidance to leaders and all other employees on disconnecting from work-related communications and other work outside of regular working hours.

b) Assistance to employees who feel obligated to habitually work an unhealthy number of hours or beyond their regular work hours.

c) Guidance to ensure compliance with Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA) provisions on disconnecting from work, while maintaining compliance with requirements surrounding overtime, hours of work, breaks, vacation, flexible or hybrid work, remote work, and other laws and best practices.

d) Balance between employees' right to disconnect and the organization's need for employee flexibility to support certain initiatives, address emergencies and in other necessary instances.

As an organization operating across Canada, MS Canada understands employees are working across different time zones and flexible work arrangements may also be a factor.

Policy Application

All MS Canada employees.

Authorization

The policy was approved by the Board of Directors on October 27, 2022.

MS Canada – Policy Manual	
Applies to:	All MS Canada employees
Frequency of review:	Every 3 (three) years
First approved:	October 27, 2022
Last reviewed:	October 15/16, 2026
Next scheduled review:	October 2029

Policy Details

Disconnecting from Work

Employees are entitled to disconnect from work outside regular working hours without fear of reprisal. Employees are encouraged to set clear boundaries between work and their personal lives, regardless of their working arrangement, whether that be onsite, flex work, remote work, or hybrid work.

To ensure support for disconnecting from work, all MS Canada employees shall:

- Update all email signature lines to include the statement: *My working hours and your working hours may differ. Please do not feel obligated to reply outside your normal working hours;*
- Ensure team members are aware of general working hours;
- Stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks outside of their regular working hours;
- Update Teams status to show as "Offline";
- Use an e-mail auto response and update their voicemail when they are taking time off, indicating they are away, an alternate contact, and the date they will return;
- Not be expected or required to respond to work-related communication outside their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off;
- Not face repercussion or punishment for not communicating or for ceasing work outside of their regular working hours; and,
- Respect co-workers' regular working hours and do not expect them to respond, communicate, or complete work outside of those hours. Consider using the delay delivery feature in Outlook where appropriate or indicating in your email/Teams message "For when you are back online...".

Workload and Productivity

MS Canada understands that employees may want or need to work outside their regular working hours to meet a time-sensitive deadline, big initiatives or to attend to an urgent matter or emergency; however, employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work. Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regular working hours should meet with their direct leader to evaluate their workload, priorities, and due dates.

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Breaks and Time Off

Breaks are provided in accordance with provincial employment standards and are intended to provide employees with time to recharge and enable them to work productively during regular working hours. Employees should take any scheduled or company-provided breaks during their shift and use that time to disconnect from work.

MS Canada understands the importance for our employees to have personal time off. Employees are encouraged to use their accrued paid vacation time in full every year and should take the time for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Employees will never be obligated to complete work-related activities during scheduled time off. Knowing that, time management is the responsibility of employees and scheduled time off should not interfere with deadlines. Leaders will work with employees to delegate job-specific duties that must be completed while the employee is on vacation to maintain workflow and productivity.

Overtime

At times, MS Canada may have a business need that requires employees to work overtime. Overtime should always be approved in advance. It may be requested by the employee or required in certain situations to ensure work is completed; however, employees should not work overtime unless approved by their direct leader.

Executive Champion

The MS Canada Vice President, People and Community is the Executive Champion for this policy.

Monitoring and Compliance

The Vice President, People and Community is responsible for leading the monitoring of the application and compliance of this policy direction in conjunction with other members of the Executive Team and supervisory staff.

Related Policies, Legislation

- Bill 27: *Working for Workers Act, 2021*, Ontario
- Flexible Work Arrangements Policy

Policy Review

The policy is to be reviewed every three years, or as needed.

- October 15/16, 2026 – Reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors

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Definitions

Disconnecting from work: Not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

Regular working hours: The time agreed to by an employee, when they are meant to complete work for MS Canada. Regular working hours are governed by employment agreements and MS Canada's Flexible Work Arrangements Policy.

Overtime hours: Hours worked beyond regular hours, as defined and applied by the applicable employment or labour standards legislation in each province.

Emergency: Refers to an unexpected and aberrant situation that demands attention before an employee's regular working hours to avoid significant adverse consequences. Significant adverse consequences may include loss of life, material financial costs, a material loss of revenues, or the inability to continue operations for the organization or its constituents or business partners. Emergencies can arise in various contexts, for instance, during a snowstorm or other natural disasters or because of events like an unplanned outage of a critical computer system.

Executive Team - The most senior level of staff leadership within MS Canada comprised of the president and chief executive officer; senior vice-president(s) and vice-president(s). One person may hold more than one position. The president and chief executive officer may alter the composition of the executive team as required from time-to-time.

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