

	POLICY / PROCEDURE	No.	1.5
	COMMUNICATIONS	Effective Date	September 26/2023
		Revision Letter	C
		Resolution Number	2023-20-08

1. Purpose

1.1. The purposes of this policy are to:

- a. ensure the accuracy, accountability, and accessibility of internal and external communications;
- b. foster a consistent, professional image in all communications; and
- c. contribute to building professional relationships with citizens, external organizations, and the media.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to internal and external communications by *District* Council members and *staff*.

3. Policy

3.1. Related Policies

- a. Forms of communication that are considered records, such as written correspondence, minutes of meetings, documents discussed or presented at meetings, and electronic mail messages and their attachments, are subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and Records Management Policy No. 1.2.
- b. Electronic communications (electronic mail, social media, mobile phone, etc.) are subject to the provisions in Table 1, Electronic Communications Acceptable Usage, attached to this policy as **Schedule A**. Use of mobile phones is subject to Mobile Communication Policy No. 4.14.
- c. Correspondence addressed to Council is subject to Council Correspondence Policy No. 1.6.
- d. Use of the *District* logo is subject to Visual Identity Policy No. 1.4.

3.2. Plain Language

Staff and elected officials will use plain language when appropriate in internal and external communications and on all communications platforms, including written documents, verbal reports, social media posts, and web pages. *District* communications will be characterized by:

- a. descriptive headings
- b. lists
- c. short sentences
- d. short paragraphs
- e. common words rather than technical terms to the extent possible
- f. the inclusion of definitions if technical terms or acronyms must be used
- g. vocabulary and structure suited to a grade 8 level
- h. the active voice
- i. conversational tone.

4. Definitions

- 4.1.** In this policy, the following terms have the meanings set out as follows:

CAO means the *District's* chief administrative officer or their designate;

District means the District of Fort St. James;

Emergency notice means a message advising recipients of an unplanned situation that poses a risk to life, safety, property, or environment or has a high probability of escalating to cause a danger to life, safety, property, or environment.

Information officer means the person assigned to this role for the *District*, the *CAO*, or their designate; and

Staff means an employee or volunteer of the *District*.

5. Procedures

6.1. Communication between Council Members and Staff

Council – Staff Relationship

The formal relationship between *staff* and members of Council must be respected to ensure that all members of *staff* and Council have equal access to information.

Council members are encouraged to direct questions and concerns to the Mayor or *CAO*. A request for information from a Council member, other than requests addressed at meetings, shall be provided in writing and circulated to all Council members.

Respect for Time

Priorities and timelines must be respected by Council and *staff*.

Meeting participants will be well prepared for meetings.

Staff will prioritize their work according to direction given by management or Council and will devote time to significant projects only once direction is given by Council to do so.

Meetings between *staff* and Councillors will be coordinated by the *CAO*.

Council may, by resolution, direct *staff* to carry out specific tasks or functions. Council is encouraged to understand staff capacity for new tasks when directing staff.

Councillor Responsibilities

Councillors will:

- publicly support *staff*;
- direct questions or concerns regarding departmental activities to the Mayor or *CAO* or use the internal complaint form/request for information;
- discuss issues with the *CAO* and advise the *CAO* of questions that may arise prior to committee or Council meetings;
- understand that their discussions with *staff* may be communicated to the *CAO*;
- request advice from the *CAO* or the corporate officer about the appropriate wording of motions; and
- consult with the *CAO* prior to making commitments to agencies, groups, citizens, or businesses.

6.2. Communication between Council Members

Meetings

Council meetings are governed by the Council Procedures Bylaw and the *Community Charter*.

Any communication, whether in person, by phone or email, between three or more Council members, may be considered a Council meeting.

Notice of all Council meetings must be posted publicly, and meetings must be open to the public, unless closed pursuant to section 90 of the *Community Charter*.

Electronic Mail

Emails between Council members or between *staff* and Council members will be copied to the *CAO* and to all Council members.

Electronic mail should not be used for discussion or decision-making purposes as group emails may be construed as an unofficial Council meeting. Discussion of issues should occur at an open meeting, or if confidential in nature, at a closed meeting.

Agendas

When a Council member wishes to add an item to a meeting agenda, they should communicate their request to the corporate officer no less than four business days before the meeting.

Calendars

Electronic Council calendars will be maintained and shared with the *CAO*.

6.3. Communication with the Media

All responses to media requests must be approved by the *information officer*.

News Releases

News releases will be vetted by the *CAO* or Mayor prior to release to the media.

If a public statement may spark significant public interest or debate, the *CAO* will, if possible, inform Council before its release.

The *CAO* shall make reasonable attempts to inform stakeholders prior to releasing information affecting them.

Staff will respond to media requests in a timely manner.

News releases shall be written in plain language, be professional in appearance, and be limited to one page in length.

News releases shall be published simultaneously on the *District* website.

Agendas, Minutes & General Information

Information of a general nature including agendas and minutes of regular and committee meetings may be provided to the media by electronic mail.

Requests for Interviews with Staff

Media requests for interviews shall be forwarded directly to the *CAO* who may delegate the request.

Staff shall not comment on matters outside their purview of responsibility, or on sensitive matters, without prior consultation with the *CAO*.

All spokespersons shall adhere to the confidentiality provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Requests for Interviews with a Council Member

Requests for interviews should be forwarded to the *CAO*.

The Mayor may fulfil a request for an interview or delegate to the *CAO* or to another Council member.

6.4. Communication with Residents

- a. Information of general interest to the community may be provided through:
 - i. newspaper,
 - ii. radio,

- iii. public notice boards,
 - iv. the electronic sign,
 - v. *District* social media pages,
 - vi. *District* website, or
 - vii. direct mail.
- b. Information regarding Council and committee meetings, agendas and minutes will be posted on the *District* website.
- c. With approval of the CAO, *staff* may use the *District* Facebook page to post announcements and information related to *District* events and activities. Posts will link to further information on the District website. Facebook page visitors will be encouraged to engage with *staff* by email, telephone, written correspondence, or through online forms available on the District website. *Staff* will not respond to comments posted on the Facebook page.

Emergency Notices

- d. Emergency notices will be:
- i. printed in a format approved by the CAO;
 - ii. forwarded by email to the Fort St. James Chamber of Commerce and Nak'azdli Whut'en for distribution;
 - iii. posted on noticeboards at the District office, Cottonwood Park, and the Visitor Information Centre;
 - iv. posted on the District website, Facebook page, and on the electronic sign; and
 - v. distributed by Voyent Alert.

6.5. Communication with Local Businesses

Information of a general nature may be provided by the methods noted in section 6.4 and may be forwarded to the Chamber of Commerce for distribution.

Information of concern to a particular business may be delivered by mail, by email, or by hand.

6.6. Communication with Other Governments or Agencies

The Mayor is the spokesperson for Council. If a member of Council is interested in formally communicating with another government, regulatory body, or agency, they should present their request to the Mayor or the CAO.

Individual members of Council should not be directly involved in any negotiations to secure contracts or agreements on behalf of the *District* unless specifically directed to do so by Council resolution.

6.7. Communication of Incidents

Types of reportable incidents are contained in Table 2, Reportable Incidents, attached to this policy as **Schedule B**.

An employee who becomes aware of a reportable incident must report the incident to the department manager as soon as possible. The department manager will communicate the incident to the *CAO* via email or telephone as soon as possible after becoming aware of the incident.

The *CAO* or department manager will communicate Level 1 incidents to Council via email immediately.

The *CAO* or department manager will communicate Level 2 incidents to Council at the next Council meeting.

7. Responsibilities

7.1. Council is responsible for approving this policy.

7.2. The *CAO* is responsible for:

- a. annual review of this policy, and
- b. administrative updates to the policy.

8. Document Approvals

Role	Position	Name of Approver	Approval Signature	Date Approved
Owner	Corporate Officer			
Reviewer	<i>CAO</i>			
Final Approver	Mayor and Council			

9. Revision History

Effective Date	Rev Letter	Document Author	Description of Change
	A		Initial Release.
July 25, 2023	B	Gwendolyn Kennedy	Plain language; minor updates
September 26, 2023	C	Gwendolyn Kennedy	Emergency notices
	D		