

CORNING JOINT FIRE DISTRICT
Harassment & Sexual Harassment Policy
Adopted: October 30, 2019
Revised:

Policy #:	
Policy:	Harassment & Sexual Harassment Policy
Effective Date:	October 30, 2019
Authority:	Labor Law 201-g, Town Law § 176 (11) and (21)
Cross-reference:	Harassment and Sexual Harassment Complaint Form

PURPOSE:

The Corning Joint Fire District ('Fire District') is committed to providing a discrimination-free working environment for all personnel. Harassment, whether or not of a sexual nature will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment is a form of harassment and of workplace discrimination.¹ All employees are required to work in a manner that prevents harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. This Policy is one component of Corning Joint Fire District's commitment to a discrimination-free work environment.

Sexual harassment is against the law and all employees have a legal right to a workplace free from sexual harassment and employees are urged to report sexual harassment by filing a complaint internally with Corning Joint Fire District. Employees can also file a complaint with a government agency or in court under federal, state or local antidiscrimination laws.

Supervisory personnel must be diligent in preventing such conduct. Any employee of the Fire District, including volunteer firefighters, may be disciplined for violating this policy. The terms "harassment" and "sexual harassment" may be used interchangeably within this policy with regard to policy provisions and enforcement.

Employee training in harassment and sexual harassment prevention will be provided to all employees within 30 days of an employees' start date and annually thereafter.

POLICY

1, General Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

"Employee" is defined as all Fire District and Fire Company personnel whether volunteer or paid.

¹ While this policy specifically addresses sexual harassment, harassment because of and discrimination against persons of all protected classes is prohibited. In New York State, such classes include age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, marital status, domestic violence victim status, gender identity and criminal history.

“Employment” is defined as relating to any person employed by the Fire District or any activity or function of a firematic or non-firematic nature involving firefighters from the Fire District in the business or affairs of the Fire District.

2. Harassment

For purposes of this policy:

“Harassment” is defined as threatening or intimidating actions or words which would make a person of reasonable mind feel at risk for their safety or the safety of others. Disagreements of opinion, even if stridently advocated are not harassment. However, conduct, demeanor, oral or written statements or other actions which would reasonably be understood to convey threats of physical, emotional, economic, or other harm may constitute harassment.

Examples of Harassment

Examples of behavior that may constitute harassment are threats of physical injury, making jokes, or serious overt or veiled threats, using loud or disrespectful information, using inappropriate language with the intent to denigrate or intimidate, taking, moving, or interfering with the personal property or firematic gear of another. This list is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive.

3. Sexual Harassment

For purposes of this policy:

“Sexual Harassment” is a form of harassment and sex discrimination that is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity and the status of being transgender.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or which is directed at an individual because of that individual’s sex when:

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, even if the reporting individual is not the intended target of the sexual harassment;
- Such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual’s employment.

A sexually harassing hostile work environment includes, but is not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or

which are directed at an individual because of that individual's sex. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, which interfere with the recipient's job performance.

Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment. This is also called "quid pro quo" harassment.

Any employee who feels harassed should report so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:
 - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body;
 - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as:
 - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's job performance evaluation, a promotion or other job benefits or detriments;
 - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities.
- Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, which create a hostile work environment.
- Sex stereotyping occurs when conduct or personality traits are considered inappropriate simply because they may not conform to other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as:
 - Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace

computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace.

- Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender, such as:
 - Interfering with, destroying or damaging a person's workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfering with the individual's ability to perform the job;
 - Sabotaging an individual's work;
 - Bullying, yelling, name-calling.

4. Statement of Policy

- A. Corning Joint Fire District's policy applies to all employees, applicants for employment, personnel, whether paid or unpaid, contractors and persons conducting business, regardless of immigration status, with Corning Joint Fire District. In the remainder of this document, the term "employees" refers to this collective group.
- B. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Any employee or individual covered by this policy who engages in sexual harassment or retaliation will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action (e.g., counseling, suspension, termination).
- C. Retaliation Prohibition: No person covered by this Policy shall be subject to adverse action because the employee reports an incident of sexual harassment, provides information, or otherwise assists in any investigation of a sexual harassment complaint. Corning Joint Fire District will not tolerate such retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports or provides information about suspected sexual harassment. Any employee of Corning Joint Fire District who retaliates against anyone involved in a sexual harassment investigation will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees, paid or unpaid personnel, or non-employees² working in the workplace who believe they have been subject to such retaliation should inform a supervisor, manager, Chief Officer, Line Officer or Commissioner. All volunteers, employees, paid or unpaid personnel or non-employees who believe they have been a target of such retaliation may also seek relief in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.
- D. Sexual harassment is offensive, is a violation of our policies, is unlawful, and may subject Corning Joint Fire District to liability for harm to targets of sexual harassment. Harassers may also be individually subject to liability. Employees of every level who engage in sexual harassment, including managers and

² A non-employee is someone who is (or is employed by) a contractor, subcontractor, vendor, consultant, or anyone providing services in the workplace. Protected non-employees include persons commonly referred to as independent contractors, "gig" workers and temporary workers. Also included are persons providing equipment repair, cleaning services or any other services provided pursuant to a contract with the employer.

supervisors who engage in sexual harassment or who allow such behavior to continue, will be penalized for such misconduct.

- E. Corning Joint Fire District will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation that ensures due process for all parties, whenever management receives a complaint about sexual harassment, or otherwise knows of possible sexual harassment occurring. Corning Joint Fire District will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible. Effective corrective action will be taken whenever sexual harassment is found to have occurred. All employees, including managers and supervisors, are required to cooperate with any internal investigation of sexual harassment.
- F. All employees are encouraged to report any harassment or behaviors that violate this policy. Corning Joint Fire District has a Harassment and Sexual Harassment Complaint Form that is available to all employees for employees to report harassment and file complaints.
- G. For purposes of this policy Civil and Line Officers are deemed to be supervisors and managers by nature of their office and are therefore **required** to report any complaint that they receive, or any harassment that they observe or become aware of to a Chief Officer or to the Board of Fire Commissioners, as may be appropriate under the circumstances.
- H. This policy applies to all volunteers, employees, paid or unpaid personnel, and non-employees and all must follow and uphold this policy. This policy must be provided to all employees and should be posted prominently in all work locations to the extent practicable (for example, in a main office, not an offsite work location) and be provided to employees upon hiring.

5. Who can be a target of sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. New York Law protects employees, paid or unpaid personnel, and non-employees, including independent contractors, and those employed by companies contracting to provide services in the workplace. Harassers can be a superior, a subordinate, a coworker or anyone in the workplace including an independent contractor, contract worker, vendor, client, customer or visitor.

6. Where can sexual harassment occur?

Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises, on personal devices or during non-work hours.

7. Retaliation

Unlawful retaliation can be any action that could discourage a worker from coming forward to make or support a sexual harassment claim. Adverse action need not be job-related or occur in the workplace to constitute unlawful retaliation (e.g., threats of physical violence outside of work hours).

Such retaliation is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. The New York State Human Rights Law protects any individual who has engaged in “protected activity.” Protected activity occurs when a person has:

- made a complaint of sexual harassment, either internally or with any anti-discrimination agency;
- testified or assisted in a proceeding involving sexual harassment under the Human Rights Law or other anti-discrimination law;
- opposed sexual harassment by making a verbal or informal complaint to management, or by simply informing a supervisor or manager of harassment;
- reported that another employee has been sexually harassed; or
- encouraged a fellow employee to report harassment.

Even if the alleged harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of harassment.

8. Reporting Sexual Harassment

Preventing sexual harassment is everyone’s responsibility. Corning Joint Fire District cannot prevent or remedy sexual harassment unless it knows about it. Any employee, paid or unpaid intern or non-employee who has been subjected to behavior that may constitute sexual harassment is encouraged to report such behavior to a supervisor, Chief Officer or Commissioner. Anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to a supervisor, Chief Officer or Commissioner.

Reports of sexual harassment may be made verbally or in writing. A Harassment & Sexual Harassment Complaint Form (“Complaint Form”) for submitting a written complaint is a part of this Policy and all employees are encouraged to use this Complaint Form to make a complaint. Employees who are reporting sexual harassment on behalf of other employees should use the Complaint Form and note that it is on another employee’s behalf.

Employees, paid or unpaid personnel or non-employees who believe they have been a target of sexual harassment may also seek assistance in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

9. Supervisory Responsibilities

Civil and Line Officers are deemed to be supervisors and managers by nature of their office. All supervisors and managers who receive a complaint or information about suspected sexual harassment, observe what may be sexually harassing behavior or for any reason suspect that sexual harassment is occurring, **are required** to report such suspected sexual harassment to a Chief Officer or Commissioner.

In addition to being subject to discipline if they engaged in sexually harassing conduct themselves, supervisors and managers will be subject to discipline for failing to report suspected sexual harassment or otherwise knowingly allowing sexual harassment to continue.

Supervisors and managers will also be subject to discipline for engaging in any retaliation.

10. Complaint and Investigation of Harassment or Sexual Harassment

All complaints or information about harassment or sexual harassment will be investigated, whether that information was reported in verbal or written form. Investigations will be conducted in a timely manner, and will be confidential to the extent possible.

An investigation of any complaint, information or knowledge of suspected harassment or sexual harassment will be prompt and thorough, commenced immediately and completed as soon as possible. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. All persons involved, including complainants, witnesses and alleged harassers will be accorded due process, as outlined below, to protect their rights to a fair and impartial investigation.

Any employee may be required to cooperate as needed in an investigation of suspected harassment or sexual harassment. Corning Joint Fire District will not tolerate retaliation against employees who file complaints, support another's complaint or participate in an investigation regarding a violation of this policy.

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations should be done in accordance with the following steps:

- Upon receipt of complaint, the Board of Fire Commissioners will conduct an immediate review of the allegations, and take any interim actions (e.g., instructing the respondent to refrain from communications with the complainant), as appropriate. If complaint is verbal, encourage the individual to complete the

“Complaint Form” in writing. If he or she refuses, prepare a Complaint Form based on the verbal reporting.

- The Board of Fire Commissioners shall appoint a Conduct Committee consisting of at least three (3) members. In a case of alleged sexual harassment, at least one (1) of the Conduct Committee members should be a female. This Conduct Committee together with the Fire District’s legal counsel will be responsible for investigating and recommending action regarding complaints involving alleged prohibited harassment by any person subject to the jurisdiction of the Fire District. If a member of the Board of Fire Commissioners is either the Complainant or the person against whom the complaint is lodged, that individual is disqualified from the process and the Secretary to the Board of Fire Commissioners or a representative selected by majority vote of the Board shall be substituted. Except as necessary to conduct investigations or to implement actions recommended and any final report prepared by the Conduct Committee, the Conduct Committee’s proceedings and reports shall be held in confidence among them.
- The members of the Conduct Committee to whom the complaint is referred will first attempt to resolve it in an informal manner by discussing it with the complainant and the person or persons against whom the complaint is lodged. If the complaint cannot be resolved in this manner, the Conduct Committee shall reduce the complaint in writing, review it with the complainant, and obtain the complainant’s signature on the complaint. The Chairperson of the Conduct Committee, who shall be a Fire Commissioner appointed by the Board of Fire Commissioners, shall oversee the investigation of the complaint. The Conduct Committee, as a whole, shall undertake to fully investigate the complaint and prepare a written report to the Board of Fire Commissioners.
- If documents, emails or phone records are relevant to the investigation, the complainant should take steps to obtain and preserve them and provide them to the Conduct Committee.
- The Conduct Committee may request and review all relevant documents, including all electronic communications.
- The Conduct Committee may interview all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses;
- The Conduct Committee will create written documentation of the investigation (such as a letter, memo or email), which contains the following:
 - A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
 - A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
 - A timeline of events;
 - A summary of prior relevant incidents, reported or unreported; and

- The basis for the decision and final resolution of the complaint, together with any corrective action(s).
- The Conduct Committee will keep the written documentation and associated documents in a secure and confidential location.
- The Conduct Committee will promptly notify the individual who reported and the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made of the final determination and implement any corrective actions identified in the written document.
- The Conduct Committee will inform the individual who reported sexual harassment of the right to file a complaint or charge externally as outlined in the next section.
- The report shall include a complete account of the investigation conducted by the Conduct Committee, the findings of the Conduct Committee and any recommendation of disciplinary action, which may include, but is not limited to a warning, suspension and/or termination depending on the conduct involved. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall review the recommendation of the Conduct Committee and take such further action as is determined appropriate in its discretion in view of the report. If it is determined that sexual harassment has occurred, the Board of Fire Commissioners will take immediate and appropriate corrective action.
- Among the actions the Board of Fire Commissioners is authorized to initiate is to direct that any employee may be placed on Administrative Leave for an indeterminate period of time in order to facilitate the investigation and determination under this policy. If an individual is suspended by the Chief as a consequence of the making of a claim of harassment, the suspended individual will automatically be placed on Administrative Leave when the initial period of suspension lapses. Administrative Leave may be compensated or uncompensated, depending upon the nature of the employee on leave and the reason for said person being placed on Administrative Leave. The placement of an individual on Administrative Leave shall not be deemed to be indicia of fault, blame, or guilt and shall not have adverse consequences with regard to the said person's future employability. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for the complainant to be placed on administrative leave to facilitate the investigation and resolution of the complaint by the Board of Fire Commissioners and no adverse or retaliatory motive or intent against the complainant shall be inferred by such action.

11. Legal Protections and External Remedies

Sexual harassment is not only prohibited by Corning Joint Fire District but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

Aside from the internal process at Corning Joint Fire District, employees may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private attorney is not required to file a complaint with a governmental agency, you may seek the legal advice of an attorney.

In addition to those outlined below, employees in certain industries may have additional legal protections.

A. State Human Rights Law (HRL)

The Human Rights Law (HRL), codified as N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State with regard to sexual harassment, and protects employees, paid or unpaid personnel and non-employees, regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints with DHR may be filed any time **within one year** of the harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, **within three years** of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court.

Complaining internally to Corning Joint Fire District does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR.

DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying of monetary damages, attorney's fees and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: www.dhr.ny.gov.

Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit dhr.ny.gov/complaint for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out,

notarized and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

B. Civil Rights Act of 1964

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act (codified as 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.). An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint, and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred, at which point the EEOC will issue a Right to Sue letter permitting the individual to file a complaint in federal court.

The EEOC does not hold hearings or award relief, but may take other action including pursuing cases in federal court on behalf of complaining parties. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a "Charge of Discrimination." The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at www.eeoc.gov or via email at info@eeoc.gov.

If an individual filed an administrative complaint with DHR, DHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

C. Local Protections

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city or town in which they live to find out if such a law exists. For example, employees who work in New York City may file complaints of sexual harassment with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Contact their main office at Law Enforcement Bureau of the NYC Commission on Human Rights, 40 Rector Street, 10th Floor, New York, New York; call 311 or (212) 306-7450; or visit www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml.

D. Contact the Local Police Department

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department.