

**Reissued: January 2024**

## **Attachment A – Personal Safety – A Guide for DPW employees working in the field.**

### **Best Field Safety Practices and Standards of Employee Behavior:**

Due to increased incidents of violence directed at field and office workers, an awareness of safety guidelines is required to better prepare employee to respond. Personal safety guidelines are important and include awareness, prevention and management of dangerous situations in your work environment. The best protection in a potentially threatening situation is to follow your intuition and by observing your surroundings.

All DPW field workers must carry a cell phone or have access to a vehicle with a radio at all times. Make sure all relevant and emergency phone numbers are programmed into your phone. Make sure phones are charged and charging cords are available.

Employees are expected to follow the DPW general and division specific work rules involving conduct in the workplace. Additional safety guidelines summarized below ensure the appropriate approach to ensure safety in the field.

#### Appearance and Demeanor:

- An employee's appearance, verbal statements and demeanor can impact the citizen's response. Employees are encouraged to introduce themselves by name, if needed, and explain their responsibilities and assignments. Employees are expected to be polite.
- Demeanor should portray a positive and professional attitude.
- Employees should avoid any irritating motions, such as tapping pens, fiddling or doodling.
- Use appropriate appearance and grooming in order to project an image of professionalism.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- If required, ask for permission to write/take notes. Listen to citizens and allow them to express their opinions, complaints or issues. Remain alert.
- Walk with a sense of purpose.
- Do not walk on the side of the street where people are loitering.
- Walk on the outside of the sidewalk, away from possible hiding places.
- Limit valuables or money on your person while at work.
- Be aware of your physical mobility or any limitations you may have.
- DPW staff should ALWAYS wear safety vests with "City of Milwaukee" lettering to clearly identify that they are City of Milwaukee employees.
- If there is a need to approach a citizen or a citizen's residence/business the employee should have their Identification Card clearly in view. Show the card and professionally identify yourself and your purpose for being there.

#### Listening Skills:

- During contact with a citizen employees are required to listen with empathy and respect. Maintaining positive eye contact and adopting a relaxed posture rather than a closed arms posture will put the individual at ease. The use of "I see" or "I understand" will demonstrate that their concerns are important. Maintain a pleasant demeanor when you are with your citizen by encouraging citizen participation.

#### Problem Solving:

- Watch for changes in mood, movements or expressions.
- Depending on your comfort level, address some of the concerns immediately to demonstrate that you are trying to find solutions.

- If you are governed by rules or program policies explain them to the resident.
- Avoid emotion provoking expressions such as “calm down” if the citizen becomes agitated.
- Do not get drawn into an aggressive situation.

#### Confronting an Agitated Citizen:

- Maintain a calm disposition so that feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, etc. do not interfere with the ability to communicate effectively. All statements should be made in a very clear, simple, and direct manner.
- Remain professional so that your involvement in the situation is viewed as clearly professional and not personal.
- Avoid taking responses personally and responding defensively.
- Show respect for citizens by speaking to them and not at them.
- Be directive, not authoritative.
- Present alternatives in a positive manner.
- Request help if needed.
- If a citizen becomes aggressive, make diffuse the situation. It is okay to say “I am sorry that I was unable to help you.” “My supervisor may be of assistance in this matter should you be interested in speaking with him/her.” Provide contact information for supervisors without revealing anger or frustration.
- Never touch or otherwise make physical contact with a resident.
- Remove yourself from the immediacy of the hostile situation, if needed.

#### Knowing the geographic area, the neighborhood, and where “Safe Places” are located:

- Carry a list of the location(s) and phone numbers for Police Districts, Fire Stations and other public buildings and proceed to those locations immediately if there is an imminent threat.
- Ask your supervisor if there are documented occurrences of violence, vicious pets on or near the premises, weapons, drugs or other violent behavior toward other workers.
- Determine what the geographic locations are for your work in terms of minimal to extremely isolated areas and/or minimal to high crime areas.

#### Situational Awareness Tips:

- Closely observe your environment for potential danger. Always have a back -up escape route.
- Ensure your vehicle is in proper running order, has sufficient fuel and a that a spare tire is available.
- Establish a routine for securing your car, car keys, alarms and any other safety equipment.
- Always lock your vehicle when traveling, when you arrive at your destination. Keep windows up whenever possible.
- Know who to call or what steps to take if you should experience a vehicle breakdown.
- If applicable, before any off-site visit it is good practice to establish a standard code word, phrase or sentence that can be incorporated in a telephone conversation to indicate danger.