



# HUNTSVILLE UTILITIES OPERATIONAL STANDARD

CEO Approval Date: 6/3/2021  
Wes Kelley

Date Posted: 6/30/2021

Implementation Date: 7/1/2021

## Standard #: OS-HR-50-001

### Standard: Internal Conflict Dispute Resolution

#### Policy Reference: HR-7-03

#### Responsible Department/Title: Human Resources/Vice President of Employee Engagement

**Purpose:** To provide guidance on the internal conflict dispute resolution (CDR) process for employees.

#### Internal CDR Standards:

1. Huntsville Utilities (HU) encourages a timely process for conflict disputes.
2. Formal CDR Process for alleged violations of policies:
  - a. Employee expectation
    - i. Employees are expected to utilize the open door process to present complaints. If the employee is uncomfortable speaking to the immediate supervisor, the employee should proceed to the next level of supervision.
    - ii. If unresolved, then the employee may proceed to HR to obtain the CDR form for completion.
    - iii. If related to an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) concern, the employee should report the issue to the EEO office immediately.
  - b. Supervisor expectation
    - i. All supervisors and above should be familiar with the formal CDR standards and procedures. As soon as a dispute is received, the supervisor should contact the HR Director for advice and procedural guidance.
    - ii. As part of the open door process, when presented with a complaint, the supervisor is expected to listen carefully, thoroughly investigate the matter, weigh the facts and circumstances, and make a fair and impartial decision consistent with HU Company policies, standards, and procedures. A concerted effort should be made to resolve the issue with the employee at this level, if possible.
  - c. If the supervisor's decision is not acceptable to the employee, he/she may obtain an official Employee CDR Form from HR and submit the matter following the formal CDR procedure. The Employee CDR Form must be utilized in order to provide a record of formal responses at each successive step of the CDR procedure.
  - d. Written responses to the employee at each progressive step of the CDR procedure should state factually and concisely the reasons for acceptance or rejection of the conflict. It is the responsibility of the employee and the immediate supervisor to ensure all documentation, witness statements, evidence, etc. accompany the CDR form at each step. Each step will be monitored and controlled by the HR Director.
3. Steps 1-4:
  - a. Step 1 - To ensure an employee's concerns can be addressed and resolved in a timely manner, the employee must submit their written dispute within ten (10) working days of the event or situation causing their CDR. The employee should also indicate the policy and/or Standard of Conduct which he/she believes is being violated and offer a recommendation toward a solution.
    - i. When the written CDR is presented to the supervisor, he/she should consider any new evidence or information which may be presented and review the verbal decision to ensure equity and fairness. The supervisor should record his/her verbal decision on the CDR form and give the original to the employee. A copy of the dispute, along with all supporting evidence and documentation, should be retained by the supervisor and the HR Director.



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- ii. Before processing the CDR beyond Step 1, ensure that the employee has a disputable issue. Certain actions or decisions involving management prerogative are not policy violations. Disputable issues involve violation or deviation from established company policy.
    - iii. The immediate supervisor shall, within five (5) working days (excluding holidays, authorized, etc.), meet with the employee and attempt to resolve the issue and shall render a decision in writing within five (5) working days after the meeting has concluded. The HR Director will work with the immediate supervisor to identify any situation(s)/issues that might be viewed as critical/relevant and could be deemed a contributing precedent.
  - b. Step 2 - If the supervisor's written response is unacceptable, the employee may refer the matter to Step 2. The department head must review the supervisor's decision for consistency and fairness, consider any new information or evidence, conduct further investigation if necessary, and provide a written answer to the employee. The department head will meet with the employee within five (5) working days (excluding holidays, authorized leaves, etc.) and attempt to resolve the dispute and shall render a decision within five (5) working days after the meeting has concluded. (If the supervisor is the department head, the employee should move to step 3.)
  - c. Step 3 - If the department head's decision fails to satisfy the employee, the employee may present the issue to the HR Director for subsequent consideration by a CDR Committee.
  - d. Step 4 - If the decision from the CDR Committee is not satisfactory to the employee, he/she may submit an appeal within five (5) working days for review by the Vice President of Employee Engagement (VPEE). The President/CEO will review the written decision prior to it being issued to the employee.
4. Conducting Step 3
- a. Selection of CDR Committee:

When a dispute is submitted to Step 3, the HR Director will appoint appropriate members to serve on the CDR Committee and designate one of the members to act as chairperson. The employee with the dispute will be able to identify one (1) Committee Member who is an active employee of HU to serve on the CDR Committee as well. The HR Director will then schedule a meeting with the entire committee to present the dispute with all attachments and to discuss in general terms how the hearing should be conducted. The HR Director will also meet with the employee to provide them with guidance on the overall process.
  - b. Conducting the Hearing:
    - i. Responsibilities:
      - a) The chairperson is responsible for:
        - 1) Scheduling the date, time and location of the CDR session.
        - 2) Notifying all participants including the employee and any other affected parties. The employee may not be represented by a third party at the CDR session but may be permitted to call witnesses who are cognizant of the circumstances and facts surrounding the issue.
        - 3) Gathering additional information as deemed necessary.
        - 4) Conducting the CDR session in a fair, objective and professional manner.
        - 5) Reviewing for content and approving the transcript of the CDR session.
      - b) Each committee member is responsible for:
        - 1) Attending the CDR session and any subsequent committee meetings called at the request of the chairperson.
        - 2) Questioning CDR participants as required gathering all relevant facts surrounding the dispute.



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- 3) Objectively assessing the evidence presented and rendering a fair and impartial decision.
- c) The HR Director will:
  - 1) Ensure all committee members and the employee bringing the dispute are familiar with their responsibilities and understand how the CDR session is to be conducted.
  - 2) Provide support for making an official record of the proceedings.
- ii. Procedural Guidelines:
  - a) The CDR session must be conducted in a professional manner and not be allowed to deteriorate into an adversarial or accusatorial procedure. The session should be rather formal and conducive to a full discovery of the relevant facts. The chairperson should use the following guidelines when conducting the CDR session:
    - 1) State the purpose of the session.
    - 2) Open the session by identifying all individuals present and defining their role in the proceedings. Only principals and witnesses possessing relevant information will be allowed to speak at the CDR session.
    - 3) Establish basic ground rules to be followed during the session.
    - 4) Read the entire dispute as written on the Employee CDR Form.
  - b) Allow the employee to present his/her side of the issue and provide the committee with any additional documents, records, or other evidence to support the CDR. The committee should thoroughly question the employee to clarify and obtain relevant information.
  - c) Allow the employee's immediate supervisor or other management official to present their position on the matter. The committee should ask questions of the management representative to clarify or gain relevant facts.
  - d) Allow the employee and supervisor to call witnesses, if desired, when presenting their respective sides of the issue.
  - e) Conduct further questioning of the parties to the extent necessary for full discovery of the relevant facts. The duration of the CDR session should not be allowed to be extended any longer than necessary.
  - f) Adjourn the session and advise the employee as to when a decision can be expected.
  - g) Once the CDR session is adjourned, begin deliberations immediately or reconvene later at the discretion of the chairperson. Any discussion among the committee members regarding the session should remain confidential and restricted to formal committee meetings with all members present.
  - h) Based on a majority opinion of the committee members, the chairperson shall record the committee's decision on the formal CDR form and present it to the employee.
- iii. Committee Powers:

The primary purpose of the Step 3 CDR Committee is to render a fair and impartial decision to either accept or reject the employee's dispute based on a full discovery of the relevant facts and on consistent application of Company rules, standards, practices or policies. Although the committee may recommend changes to current Company policies, it is not empowered to formulate new policy.

Recommended changes to company process should be submitted in writing to the President after the hearing is concluded. Because circumstances surrounding each CDR session may vary widely, the decision of the committee on a specific dispute will not necessarily serve as a precedent for future dispute. All CDR claims will be reviewed for potential EEO violations.



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If the decision of the CDR Committee is unacceptable to either the employee or supervisor, the matter may be submitted to Step 4 for final resolution by the VPPE. The written decision will be reviewed by the President/CEO prior to being issued to the employee.

**Original Issue Date:** 3/2/87 (former 7-03 Handling Employee Grievances)

**Revision Date:** 5/13/19, 6/1/23 (N/C)



# Internal Conflict Dispute Resolution

## HUNTSVILLE UTILITIES - EMPLOYEE CDR FORM

### CONFLICT DISPUTE RESOLUTION (CDR) FORM

Name of EMPLOYEE \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_ Shift \_\_\_\_\_ Employee Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Relevant Policy/Policies being Violated: \_\_\_\_\_

STEP ONE (1) STATEMENT FROM EMPLOYEE- Statement of ISSUE and the Facts upon which the CDR is Based. (Due w/in ten (10) working days of incident)

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of EMPLOYEE Date:

Employee's Recommendation toward a solution in compliance with Relevant Policy:  
(Feel free to attach a separate document)

STEP ONE (1) RESPONSE FROM SUPERVISOR:

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Answer: Accepted ____ Rejected ____	_____ Signature of Supervisor	_____ Date
	_____ Signature of EMPLOYEE	_____ Date

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APPEAL TO STEP TWO (2):

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Step Two (2) RESPONSE FROM SUPERVISOR	_____ Signature of EMPLOYEE (Due w/in five days of Step 1):	_____ Date
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Answer: Accepted ____ Rejected ____	_____ Signature of Supervisor	_____ Date
	_____ Signature of EMPLOYEE	_____ Date

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APPEAL TO STEP THREE (3) – CDR COMMITTEE:

(Decision to be rendered by Committee w/in 5 days.

Employee can respond w/in 10 days)

Step Three (3) RESPONSE FROM MANAGER:

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Signature of CDR Committee Members	_____ Signature of Grievant	_____ Date
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Answer: Accepted ____ Rejected ____	_____ Signature of EMPLOYEE	_____ Date
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Appeal to Step Four (4) (EXECUTIVE REVIEW):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of EMPLOYEE Date

Step Four Answer w/ Recommendation/Action toward a Resolution

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Signature of Vice President Employee Engagement

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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Answer: Acknowledged \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of EMPLOYEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Director of EEO, D&I

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of General Counsel

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of President/CEO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Addendums:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Stenographer Transcript Completed

\_\_\_\_\_ Notes submitted to HR from Committee Members