I. **PURPOSE:**
Standards of business and personal conduct are important to the success of the Cooperative and each employee. Enforcement of these standards will not only contribute to the continued economic viability of the Cooperative but also will help make the Cooperative a better and safer place to work.

II. **POLICY:**
A. All employees are expected to abide by applicable Federal and State laws and regulations in the performance of their job duties, as well as other commonly accepted standards of business and personal conduct. These standards include honesty, integrity, and mutual respect for fellow employees, supervisors, managers, and customers. Employees are expected also to observe and comply with all policies and performance standards that may be established by the Cooperative.

B. Violation of these standards may result in discipline up to and including discharge, depending on the circumstances involved. It would be impractical and perhaps even impossible to list all possible instances of potential work-related misconduct or performance issues. However, listed below are several examples or benchmarks of the kinds of misconduct or
performance problems that may result in discipline. These examples are intended as further guidance to managers, supervisors, and employees regarding the Cooperative’s general standards and expectations described above.

1. Dishonesty in any form, including falsification of records or reports or providing misleading information.
2. Theft or unauthorized possession of property belonging to the Cooperative, other employees, or customers.
3. Damage, loss, or destruction of Cooperative property or property belonging to customers or other employees due to willful, reckless, careless, or negligent acts.
4. Unauthorized use or misuse of Cooperative time, material, equipment, property, or confidential information.
5. Being under the influence of, possessing, or using alcohol or other intoxicants or illegal substances while on duty.
6. Insubordination, failure to perform assigned work, or neglect of duties.
7. Poor performance, failure to meet job requirements, inefficient or inadequate completion of assigned duties, sleeping or loafing on the job.
8. Failure to observe safety rules and regulations.
9. Unexcused or excessive absenteeism or tardiness.
10. Failure to work courteously and harmoniously with other employees, customers, and other persons doing business with the Cooperative.
11. Fighting, horseplay, or other disorderly conduct that may endanger the well-being of other employees, customers, or the operation of the Cooperative.
12. Threatening, harassing, intimidating, or coercing others; using
profane, obscene, or abusive language; or interfering with the
duties or performance of others.

13. Other conduct that could adversely affect the job performance,
effectiveness, or safety of the employee or others; or the
Cooperative’s effectiveness, interests, or regard in our industry or
service area.

These examples are not all inclusive and do not reflect all possible
circumstances that may result in discipline. Specific questions about the
application of this policy to any particular situation should be directed to
your manager.

C. Failure to observe Cooperative policies, rules, and standards, may result
in disciplinary action including counseling, warnings, suspension, or
discharge depending on the circumstances involved.

1. The Cooperative’s discipline policy is intended to help employees
identify and correct work-related problems and deficiencies, not to
be punitive. The Cooperative normally will initially warn employees
for minor infractions with limited risks of harm to personnel,
property, or other interests of the Cooperative before to taking more
severe disciplinary action.

Serious misconduct with actual or potential risk of significant
damage or harm to employees, property, or other Cooperative
interests may result in severe disciplinary action or discharge
without prior warnings.

2. The Cooperative will endeavor to fairly and objectively evaluate the
relevant facts and evidence prior to assessing disciplinary action.
Where appropriate, the Cooperative will conduct a formal
investigation and/or hearing to adequately evaluate the relevant
facts. Employees ordinarily will be given an opportunity to explain
or defend their actions prior to any disciplinary action.

However, there may be circumstances, where immediate suspension from work may be appropriate, pending further investigation of the facts. Such cases may involve serious employee misconduct, or where risks or personal injury or property damage are present, or where necessary to adequately gather and investigate the facts.

D. Guidance regarding the Cooperative’s disciplinary process:

All instances of possible disciplinary action will be handled on an individual basis, taking into account the nature of the offense, the actual and/or potential (reasonably foreseeable) harm or damage involved, and the employee’s prior work record.

1. **Counseling.** In most cases of minor misconduct or poor performance, the supervisor will initially discuss the inappropriate behavior or performance problem with the employee. The counseling is intended to make sure the employee understands what is expected, including any applicable rules or standards. The employee will be expected to agree to make necessary improvements or corrections. The counseling will be documented in writing in the employee’s file and the employee will receive a copy.

2. **Warning.** If the problem persists or if other problems develop, the supervisor will ordinarily talk with the employee again about his/her deficiencies and issue a written disciplinary warning to the employee.

The warning will describe the problem, specify the improvement or correction that is expected, establish a time period for improvement
(if appropriate), and advise the employee that more serious
discipline will occur, if the problem is not corrected. The employee
will be given a copy of the written warning and a copy of the
warning will be placed in the employee’s personnel file.

3. **Final Warning/Suspension.** If the employee’s misconduct or
performance problems are not corrected, the next step ordinarily
would be a frank discussion between the supervisor and employee
and a final warning advising the employee in writing that if the
problems are not corrected, he/she may be discharged.

In cases where serious misconduct may be involved, the
Cooperative may suspend an employee at this step without pay,
generally for up to five (5) days depending on the circumstances.
The suspension is intended to (1) Give the employee time to
consider whether to voluntarily leave employment with the
Cooperative or to agree to perform his or her job duties in
compliance with the expectations and standards of the
Cooperative, and (2) Give management time to review all the facts
and consider possible courses of action regarding continued
employment of the suspended employee.

4. **Discharge.** When the Cooperative’s efforts to correct the
employee’s deficiencies have failed or in cases of serious
misconduct, the employee will be discharged.

**IMPORTANT:** Management may modify or skip any of the above
disciplinary steps taking into account the seriousness of the
infraction, or any mitigating or aggravating circumstances, or the
employee’s past work record.
E. This policy is not intended nor should it be implied to create an employment contract or a guarantee of employment. Employment with the Cooperative is voluntary and may be terminated by the employee or the Cooperative at any time for any lawful reason.

III. PROVISIONS:

A. Supervisors are expected to review all work performance or misconduct problems within their areas of responsibility with their department manager.

B. Department managers are responsible to review all disciplinary matters involving chronic performance problems or serious misconduct, including recommendations for appropriate action, with the General Manager/CEO.

Final authority regarding the discharge of any employee rests with the General Manager/CEO after review of all the pertinent facts and recommendations from appropriate department managers and supervisors.

1. Any employee who believes the disciplinary action taken is unjust under this policy may have the matter reviewed by submitting a written request for reconsideration with his/her department manager within one week of written notification of the disciplinary action. Such request for reconsideration should include the basis for the request including any evidence the employee may have to support the request.

2. The department manager will review all pertinent and available evidence and any recommendations from the employee's supervisor. The department manager will prepare his/her own
written recommendation and submit it to the General Manager/CEO together with all relevant back-up information and statements.

3. After reviewing the department manager’s recommendations, the General Manager/CEO at his/her discretion may:
   a. Schedule a hearing with the employee, his/her supervisor, his/her department manager, and any witnesses whose testimony can amplify or clarify the circumstances of the case
   b. Decide against reconsideration.

4. The General Manager/CEO will issue a letter outlining his findings and decision regarding the appeal. The General Manager/CEO’s decision shall constitute the final action of the Cooperative, and will be transmitted in writing to the employee, his/her supervisor, and all other personnel involved. A copy will be placed in the employee’s file.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY:

The General Manager/CEO is responsible for seeing that the provisions of this policy are carried out.

V. PRIMACY OF POLICY

This policy supersedes any existing policy that may be in conflict with the provisions of this policy. This policy does not represent a contract between the employer and employee, and the employer herein may change the policies alone and without notice.
APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Doug Schmier, President

DATE APPROVED: June 20, 2002
DATE REVISED: February 20, 2017