

Department of Public Works and Engineering

Subject: COURTESY TO THE PUBLIC	Departmental Policy 1-13
	Effective Date: Upon Approval

I. Purpose

To establish uniform standards *and training requirements* in the area of public service, for both external (non-City of Houston employees) and internal (City of Houston employees) customers.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all Department of Public Works and Engineering personnel and supersedes any other former Departmental policy, procedure or directive.

III. Policy

Department of Public Works and Engineering employees should remember that the City of Houston is in business to serve the public and that the public always comes first. They are entitled to the same thoughtful treatment that employees themselves would like to receive. Members of the public should not be treated in a condescending or impolite manner and should never be kept waiting an unreasonable amount of time.

A. Training

All employees who are assigned the duties of a receptionist or who act as the primary backup for this function are required to receive training from the Professional Development Section. This training will include phone etiquette, the history of public works, an explanation of Public Works and Engineering organization and departmental responsibilities, and an overview of the City of Houston organization and departmental responsibilities. All new employees hired after the effective date of this policy will be required to complete training prior to performing these duties. Deputy Directors are responsible for providing current organizational charts to the Professional Development Section each time there is a change in the structure of the group/divisions.

B. Procedures

When a member of the public approaches an employee with a question or complaint, the employee will give the matter his or her immediate attention. If a member of the public becomes abusive or argumentative and the employee cannot properly handle the situation, the person should be referred to the employee's supervisor.

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Employees should be particularly careful to exercise courtesy and thoughtfulness in using the telephone.

- A. Give the name of the Department and the identity of the speaker.
- B. The person receiving the call should not put the caller on hold waiting for the called party to pick up unless he/she knows the person being called is or will be immediately available. The caller should not be placed on hold for a prolonged period unless he/she asks to and the called party knows they are on hold. Even then the caller should be monitored to insure he/she wishes to remain on hold. Should the caller decide to stop holding, thank them for their patience and take the information cited in step C below.
- C. When a caller leaves a name, number, and/or message, make sure it is recorded correctly and given to the appropriate individual.

Employees are expected to deliver customer requests in a timely manner without friction, apprehension, or causing an undue burden to the customer.

When dealing with an internal or external customer DO:

- Treat them with dignity and respect.
- Be patient, courteous, and polite.
- Listen to the request before you give an answer.
- View the situation from their stand point.
- Try to help them before referring them to another office or department which you know can assist them.
- Repeat the inquiry of the caller so that you accurately record the information they are seeking.

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When dealing with an internal or external customer **DO NOT:**

- Get angry
- Be defensive (an attitude of defense)
- Keep them waiting or ignore their request
- Be rude
- Talk down to them
- Redirect them to intentionally avoid performing their request.

Customer satisfaction is the key to success in any organization and implementation of the suggestions above can be the key to our department's success.

IV. Compliance

Adherence to the above is mandatory. Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

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