OFFICE ETIQUETTE

Your District's image is a reflection of you. The customer will form his/her opinion about the quality of the district's services from you. Because your District wishes to provide the most efficient, most courteous service possible, you too will want to provide efficient, courteous service.

Working with your supervisors & advisors

1. When you notice an article your board should read—clip it out and send them copies.
2. Underline or highlight pertinent points in articles and speeches so they won't have to read the unrelated items.
3. Keep a schedule for the board members—noting and reminding them of reports due, meetings, and appointments.
4. Post a wall chart or calendar showing coming events.
5. Remind them of regular monthly meetings.
6. Practice the same office manners on your board that you do on others.

Optional: Have that coffeepot on for board meetings—maybe some donuts, too.

Greeting Office Visitors

1. Greet your visitors with a friendly smile; <u>look them in the eyes.</u>
2. Don't let them wait to be greeted. Acknowledge their presence promptly. If you are busy, take time to greet them. If you are talking on the telephone, excuse yourself, greet your visitors and tell them you will be with them shortly. If you are helping another office visitor, use the same procedure.
3. Always use a pleasant tone of voice. Even if your visitor is critical, emotional, and impolite—don't copy or reflect his attitude or behavior. Don't argue, don't contradict. <u>Do be tactful</u> but <u>do not compromise</u> standard District or NRCS policies.
4. Be a good listener and show a genuine interest. Courtesy shows in your tone of voice, body position, choice of words, and your alert and responsive manner.

5. Learn the names of those who visit the office regularly.
6. Know the schedules of the other office personnel, even if this means reminding them as they leave the office.
7. If a visitor must wait until someone is free, see that he/she is offered a seat. If he/she hasn't time to wait, offer to take a message, arrange an appointment, or have someone call.
8. Learn about the services offered by your District and other agencies so that you can properly direct visitors. Don't send a visitor to some other office just because it <u>might</u> be the right one.
9. If everyone will be out of the office, leave a note on the door telling when someone will return.

Telephone Etiquette and Usage

A major portion of the District's business is done by telephone and many impressions are formed from these contacts. It is important that employees be courteous, helpful and respectful. General guidelines are:

1. Answer the telephone promptly.
2. Identify your agency and yourself, "Conservation Office", (your name).
3. Maintain a cheerful, enthusiastic tone of voice.
4. If you need to put someone on hold, keep him or her posted periodically.
5. Transfer calls to the proper place.
6. Keep colleagues informed when you leave your work area.
7. Be prepared to take messages.
8. "Listen!" to what the caller is saying.
9. The telephone is to be used for business purposes. While personal calls are sometimes necessary, they should be kept to an absolute minimum.

E-mail Etiquette and Usage

E-mail is part of our daily workload and should be viewed no differently than mail from the post office. We receive and send e-mails on a regular basis. Check your e-mail daily and respond in a timely manner just as you would to a message on the answering machine.

Voice mail/Answering machine

Acknowledge phone messages as soon as possible. Even if you don't know all the information requested by the caller, you should contact the caller to let him/her know that you got the message and are working on the request or have forwarded the request to the appropriate co-worker.

When leaving a message be clear and concise. Prior to calling, know the message you want to convey. Sometimes it helps to jot a few notes down prior to calling so that you are ready just in case you get that 'beep'. Be sure to leave your name and a phone number where you can be reached.

Preparing Correspondence

A good letter is pleasant and to the point. Of course, the letter should also furnish the help the recipient needs. To accomplish this, your letter should:

1. Be complete. Your letter should include everything pertinent. The person receiving it shouldn't have to write again to ask for more information. A good guide is to imagine yourself as the addressee and consider whether or not you would still have a question.
2. Be Clear. The receiver shouldn't have to write again for an explanation.
    a. Use the familiar word instead of the $50 word. If technical words or phrases cannot be avoided, use them but define them.
    b. Use a conversational, friendly tone, just as you would in person. Use "we" and "you" and other personal references.
    c. Make the sentences and paragraphs short—but don't overdo it to the point that your letter sounds choppy.
    d. Favor the active voice over the passive—"We received your letter" is better than "Your letter was received". Better still, "Thanks for the letter;" he'll know you got it, and you will have made him feel appreciated too.
3. Be concise. Don't delay in getting to the point; just answer what he asked and give him the information he needs.
4. Always check spelling and grammar.
5. Use the proper letterhead. If you're writing on behalf of the district, use the district's heading. If you are writing on behalf of NRCS, use the NRCS letter heading.