



10-Minute Supervisor Trainings

Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission

March 2013

CIVIL RIGHTS

Conservation Districts, as governmental agencies, need to ensure that they are treating everyone with respect, from employees to customers. As conservation district supervisors, it is up to each of you to protect the district's interests as required by federal and state laws, as well as by local ethics guidelines.

FUNDAMENTALS:

- Know/follow the statues/laws
- Develop and follow policies
- Ensure employees know/follow policies
- Utilize proper documentation
- Work together with fellow board members and with state and federal partners



CIVIL RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO EMPLOYEES:

Although it can be years between hiring district employees, boards need to remember that there is a federal law prohibiting employers from discriminating in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Kentucky law incorporates all these prohibitions, but adds a prohibition against discriminating based on whether the potential employee is a smoker or non-smoker.



CIVIL RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO CUSTOMERS:

Conservation districts are the hub for local, state, and federal programs. It is important to remember that ALL landowners are equally able to take advantage of the programs that come through your district.

For federal and state programs, discrimination is prohibited on the bases of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, limited English proficiency, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program.

In programs that receive federal financial assistance from USDA, discrimination is prohibited on the bases of race, color, religious creed, sex, political beliefs, age, disability, national origin, or limited English proficiency. (Not all bases apply to all programs.)

NRCS also requires that each district have 4 civil-rights related posters ("And Justice For All," "Sexual Harassment is Illegal," "Equal Employment Opportunity Counseling Program," and "Equal Employment Opportunity Is The Law"); 2 policy statements (from the Secretary of Agriculture and from the NRCS Chief); and General Manual 230 files in all locations administering USDA programs. The posters and policy statements are available for download on NRCS's Civil Rights website.

CIVIL RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO OTHER BOARD MEMBERS:

Demographically, the conservation district board should come close to matching the make up of the county. It's a good idea to have a mix of board members of differing ages, sexes, races, etc.

While it is important that all the members of each district's board work well together, it is equally important to make sure that there will be a variety of opinions on the board to ensure that the needs of all the landowners in the district are being considered.

This is something that should be considered when the board is approaching potential new members with requests to fill out a petition.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

When hiring a new employee or updating your office handbook with regard to employment, refer to the 10 Minute Training entitled "Labor Laws," which was presented in June 2011.

For USDA guidelines and requirements regarding civil rights, visit NRCS's Civil Right's Division's website or contact your district conservationist.

For state guidelines and requirements, contact your field representative.

For local guidelines, check the ethics guidelines adopted by your local fiscal court.