

BAILEYVILLE UTILITIES DISTRICT

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Our aim: The Baileyville Utilities District (B.U.D.) is committed to providing quality customer service to all its consumers by maintaining an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect with all. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our consumers and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore we aim to ensure that:

- filing a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way—for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures;

We recognize that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with immediately. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters low profile;
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred.
- An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved, but if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure will be implemented.

Preamble:

Definition: The B.U.D. defines a complaint as “any expression of dissatisfaction with a contractor, employee, or trustee etc. that relates to B.U.D. and that requires a formal response”.

Purpose: The formal/informal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and whenever possible resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction.

B.U.D.’s responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal/informal complaint in writing or verbally where applicable;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- react reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action when appropriate.

A complainant’s responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to the B.U.D. superintendent’s attention immediately;
- explain the problem clearly and completely, including any action taken to date;
- allow the superintendent a reasonable time to investigate the matter and respond;
- recognize that some circumstances may be beyond the superintendent’s control.

Confidentiality:

- In lieu of exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and all interested parties maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant in writing.

FORMAL COMPLAINT PROTOCOL

Formal complaint procedures are for substantiating a complaint with evidence, or formally bringing the interested parties together to attempt to reach an agreement.

FORMAL ACTION IS USUALLY APPROPRIATE WHEN:

- an informal resolution is not obtainable;
- the person complaining wants to pursue it formally;
- the allegations are serious;
- discipline is a possible outcome if the allegations are substantiated;
- the allegations are denied;
- the person complaining has been victimized;
- the complaint is against a contractor, contractor employee, or trustee that relates to the B.U.D.

FORMAL WAYS OF DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS INCLUDE;

- informing the person(s) being complained about of the details, tangible evidence submitted, possible outcomes and ask them to respond in a timely manner in writing;
- give all parties an opportunity to present facts, witnesses, documents in their defense and inform them of their right to involve professional and non-professional support;
- filing a written report and recommending appropriate action after all the evidence has been heard and substantiated;
- implementing the action.
- explain the appeal process to all interested parties;

IMPARTIALITY;

- It is important for anyone investigating or mediating a complaint not to jump to any conclusions and to hear both sides of the issue in their entirety, before making a decision;

INFORMAL COMPLAINT PROTOCOL

Complaints may vary in severity and complexity. Not every complaint should be addressed in the same way, and all interested parties should be provided both informal and formal ways to raise a complaint to best suit the circumstances of the issue.

Informal procedures are for quick problem solving rather than investigating substantial claims. Informal complaints are most appropriate in cases where the allegations are less serious, or the problem is based on miscommunication or a misunderstanding and should be handled by the front line superintendent.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS IN GENERAL:

- all complaints should be referred to the front line superintendent immediately, regardless of their origin or substance;
- the front line superintendent will determine if the complaint should be addressed as informal or formal and act accordingly;

CUSTOMER COMPLAINANTS SHOULD:

- approach the front line superintendent first and foremost and verbally express the complaint and request a desired outcome;
- give the front line superintendent a reasonable amount of time to address the complaint and offer a solution;
- should not approach a B.U.D. trustee to verbally complain or submit a complaint relating to B.U.D. contractor, contractor employees, B.U.D. employee or representative.

FRONTLINE SUPERINTENDENT WILL:

- document and act accordingly on all complaints received and notify all interested parties;

- ascertain if the complaint qualifies as informal or formal and act accordingly;
- an informal complaint will be acted upon by the frontline superintendent and an attempt for prompt resolution will be sought, based on case by case circumstances;
- submit all complaints received to interested parties;
- formal complaints submitted to the frontline superintendent will only be accepted if in writing and signed by the complainant(s) and immediately forwarded to the Chairman of the B.U.D. trustees and all interested parties;

ALL INTERESTED PARTIES WILL:

- upon receipt of a verbal or written complaint, immediately refer the complainant to the frontline superintendent and refrain from offering resolution, advice or suggested outcome of the complaint and; in a timely manner notify the frontline superintendent of the complaint forthcoming preferably by email, text or in writing.

INTERESTED PARTIES INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- Utilities district trustees and representatives;
- Contractor(s) employees and their representatives;
- Complainants;
- B.U.D. full time and part time employees and representatives;
- State and local agencies and authorities.