

### **Guidelines for Terminating Employment Safely and Effectively**

Terminating an individual's employment is one of the most difficult steps a supervisor can take, and should not be taken lightly. Preparation is key – careful planning and documentation can limit misunderstandings, hostility and blame. Supervisors should consult with relevant resources, prior to finalizing the termination decision, to confirm it is consistent with policy and to ensure that the events leading to the termination are properly documented and considered. The following practices can help you manage terminations safely and effectively.

1. **Plan** ahead and involve relevant resources such as your area management, Human Resources, and University Legal Counsel. Be sure that there is a well-established and documented basis for the need to terminate an individual's employment.
2. If there are **safety concerns**, consult the Virginia Tech Police Department and complete the *Request for End of Employment Safety Review*. With the Police, evaluate the need to have a police officer present for the termination meeting or standing by in the area. Also consider the potential risk to the university's electronic data and computer systems. If applicable, instruct your department's IT support to disable the individual's network access and email. Should you need to access the employee's electronic files, emails, voice messages, etc., communicate that to IT prior to, or immediately following the termination meeting.
3. Conduct the meeting as **privately** as possible, ideally at or near the end of the workday. By doing so, an employee's potential embarrassment when gathering their personal belongings may be reduced (e.g., fewer employees in the work area). At least one other member of management should attend the meeting as a witness.
4. Keep the termination meeting **brief** and focused. The purpose of the meeting is to communicate the message the employment relationship is ending. Be prepared to answer relevant questions from the employee, but do not engage in a debate or argument about the termination decision. Emphasize that the decision is final.
5. Remain **compassionate** and respectful, also firm and clear in your statements. Take responsibility for the decision and do not blame others for the termination. Designate a point of contact for the individual for any follow-up issues. They may also contact Central HR at 540-231-9331 for further information.
6. At the conclusion of the meeting, **thank** the individual for their contributions to the university and collect all university property in their possession (purchasing card, keys, Hokie passport, building access card, cell phone, uniforms, tools, manuals, etc.). Have the individual gather their personal belongings and immediately leave the premises. An area supervisor should be present while the employee is collecting personal items. The supervisor should monitor the process to ensure university property is not removed or destroyed. If the individual has a number of personal belongings, consider scheduling a separate time, after regular business hours.

7. In some cases, it **may** be wise to physically escort the individual to and from the work area. If there are any safety or security concerns, VTPD should be notified and a police officer will escort the person from the premises.

8. All **documentation** associated with a termination should be sent to HR for the former employee's personnel file. If departmental personnel files are also maintained, they should be kept in a confidential and secure place.

For additional information, contact Employee Relations at 540-231-5303 or 540-231-7772.