

ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMORANDUM

Miscellaneous No. 23

To: All Agency Employees

From: Director Weaver

Date: February 5, 2026



RE: Policy and Guidance for Public Access, Interaction, and Recording

This document was created with assistance from ChatGPT. All information has been reviewed and edited for accuracy by IDWR's Leadership Group.

Purpose

This policy gives employees clear, practical guidance for interacting with members of the public, including individuals' rights to take photographs, and make video and audio recordings in public areas of IDWR facilities. The goal is to support safe, efficient public service while respecting constitutional rights, maintaining professionalism, and preventing escalation of inappropriate conduct.

Front-line staff routinely interact with individuals who may be frustrated, emotional, or critical of government actions. This policy is designed to help staff respond consistently, focus on conduct rather than content, and know when and how to seek support.

Scope

This policy applies to all IDWR employees, contractors, customers, and visitors at IDWR facilities.

Core Principles

- The Department serves the public by facilitating lawful activities and supporting applicants in completing statutorily authorized application, permitting, and licensing processes.
- The Department respects First Amendment and other constitutional rights, including actual speech as well as symbolic or expressive conduct.
- De-escalation and staff safety are Department priorities.
- Staff responses must be content-neutral and based on observable behavior and operational impact—not the viewpoint being expressed.
- Staff are not required to tolerate threats, harassment, intimidation, or conduct that disrupts agency operations or interferes with service to others.

Definitions

Agency: The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) and the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB), including divisions, programs, staff, members, and facilities.

Employee: Full- and part-time employees, temporary and contract staff, and IWRB members.

Public Area: Agency areas open to the public during regular business hours.

Recording: The action of creating a record of events on video or audio media.

Non-Public / Restricted Area: Areas that are not open to the public where badge access is required or a reasonable expectation of privacy or security exists. Restricted areas shall be posted. For example, signage could state: Restricted Area. Authorized Personnel Only. Do Not Enter.

Relevant Policy and Rules

- [IDAPA 38.04.06 – Use of State Property in the Capitol Mall, Multi-Agency Facilities, and Other State Properties](#)
- [IDWR Department Policy - Harassment Avoidance](#)
- [IDWR Department Policy – Standards of Conduct](#)

Public Facility Access

Individuals may access public areas to conduct business or observe agency activities. The Department may impose reasonable, content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions to ensure safety, security, and efficient operations.

IDWR state, regional, and field offices must clearly identify public and restricted areas with clearly marked signage. Responsibility for posting and maintaining the signage in IDWR's facilities is as follows:

State Office: Purchasing Support Services

Regional Offices: Regional Managers

Preston Field Office: Water Resources Supervisor

Salmon Field Office: Project Manager 1

Video and Audio Recording

- Recording is generally permitted in designated public areas such as lobbies, hallways, and public meeting spaces. Individuals engaging in recording are not required to explain why or identify themselves.
- Recording is prohibited in restricted areas or other areas marked with signage.
- Recording may be restricted in public lobbies when confidential information is being exchanged or handled.
- Recording activity that blocks entrances or exits, creates safety concerns, or significantly interferes with agency operations is prohibited.

Staff should not attempt to confiscate devices, block recording, or delete recordings.

State Office Access – Water Center (Boise)

These guidelines were created for the IDWR's State Office located at 322 E. Front Street, Suite 648, Boise, Idaho. Office managers shall adopt similar guidance with consideration to site specifics in all regional and field offices.

State Office First Floor Security Desk

Individuals must sign in at the Water Center Security Desk before accessing the sixth floor. If an individual refuses to sign in at the Water Center Security Desk, building security will contact IDWR to arrange an employee escort.

State Office Fifth Floor

No public access to IDWR workspaces or conference rooms unless accompanied by an IDWR employee.

State Office Sixth Floor

- **Lobby:** Public access permitted without escort; Recording allowed.
- **Restrooms:** Public access permitted without escort; Recording prohibited.
- **Front Desk Reception:** Public access permitted without escort but individuals must check in and coordinate their visit with reception staff. Individuals will be asked to sign-in at the front desk. Sign-in is not required but strongly encouraged for safety reasons.
 - Due to the regular presence of confidential records, unauthorized recording is prohibited in the Front Desk Reception room.
- **Conference Rooms (602 A–D):** Public access permitted without escort *during* scheduled meetings, hearings, or other public events.
- **Restricted Office Areas:** Public access only when accompanied by an employee.

Regional and field offices shall document and maintain site-specific access procedures in writing.

Expectations of Staff

Employees should always remain calm, professional, and courteous in their interactions, even when faced with challenging or disruptive behavior. The objective is to avoid escalation and continue serving the public effectively.

If an employee feels uncomfortable, overwhelmed, or uncertain while interacting with an individual, they should seek supervisory assistance.

See **Attachment A** for practical guidance on common interaction scenarios.

Reporting and Escalation

Supervisor Notification

If an interaction becomes difficult or disruptive, staff should notify a supervisor when:

- The interaction is being recorded by an individual.
- An in-person visitor or caller becomes argumentative, angry, or disruptive and cannot be de-escalated.
- Conduct raises safety or security concerns.

Supervisor Role

Supervisors will manage the interaction, explain agency policy, and determine next steps, including:

- Contacting building security when operations are disrupted for a prolonged period or they are concerned for employee safety.
- Coordinating with law enforcement when required.
- Reporting to Senior Management.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement should be contacted only as a last resort. The following describe some instances where involving law enforcement may be appropriate.

- An individual trespasses into a clearly marked non-public area and refuses to leave after being politely asked by IDWR staff, building security staff, or both, to do so.
- An individual engages in prolonged threatening, abusive, or harassing behavior.
- An individual assaults an employee.
- There is a clear and immediate safety or security risk to people or property.

Law enforcement should be contacted only when necessary and, at the Water Center, preferably by building security staff rather than IDWR employees. However, if an emergency occurs in which an employee feels there is an imminent and real threat to their safety, health, or life or those of their coworkers, they should immediately locate to a secure area and dial 911.

Regional managers or their designees serve as law enforcement contacts for regional offices.

Documentation and Support

- Document terminated calls, threats, or repeated abusive contacts.
- Report concerning behavior or credible threats to a supervisor promptly.

Conclusion

Employees are entitled to a safe, respectful, and functional work environment. While criticism and strong language alone do not justify ending an interaction, staff may set boundaries and disengage when behavior becomes threatening, harassing, or disruptive to agency operations or public access.

Attachment A: Guidance for Public Interaction, Recording, and De-escalation

Purpose

This attachment supports front-line staff in managing difficult or disruptive interactions while maintaining professionalism, employee safety, and effective public service. Difficult or disruptive interactions may include but are not limited to: verbal harassment, repeated contacts, and recording of staff by an individual or customer. Guidance focuses on conduct and impact, not viewpoint or message.

Key Principles

- Stay calm, professional, and neutral. Avoid arguing or escalating. Aim to be *polite but boring*.
- Safety first. Staff are not expected to tolerate threats, intimidation, or behavior that feels unsafe.
- Ask for support early. Supervisory assistance is encouraged for difficult, persistent, or recurring situations.
- Document appropriately. Clear documentation supports consistency and follow-up.

When Being Recorded (In Person or by Phone)

Staff should:

- Identify appropriately: State your name and job title if asked. Do not share personal information.
- Continue working: Focus on assigned duties and assisting customers.
- Protect confidentiality: Shield documents, screens, and conversations involving non-public information.

Staff should not:

- Confiscate, touch, or physically block recording devices.
- Delete or request deletion of recordings.
- Record or photograph the visitor.

Responding to Yelling, Swearing, or Abusive Language

- Remain calm and professional. Do not respond emotionally.
- Acknowledge the concern when possible:
"I hear that you're frustrated and I want to help."
- Set clear, behavior-based boundaries:
"I'm willing to help, but I need the conversation to remain respectful."
- Redirect to solutions: Explain available processes, next steps, or follow-up options.

When It Is Appropriate to End an Interaction

Staff may end a call or in-person interaction when:

- Threats or intimidation occur.
- Harassment continues after a clear warning that staff intends to disengage from the interaction.
- Conduct disrupts agency operations or prevents service to others.
- Reasonable instructions (e.g., lowering voice, stopping abusive language) are refused.

Recommended process for ending an interaction (when feasible):

1. Issue a clear warning:
"If the yelling/profanity continues, I will need to end this call."
2. Offer an alternative: Written correspondence, a scheduled call, or escalation to a supervisor.
3. End clearly and professionally:
"I am ending this call now. You may contact the agency again when you are ready to communicate respectfully."

Repeat or Excessive Callers

The Department may limit repeated contacts that interfere with staff productivity or public access.

For repeat or excessive callers:

- Document frequency, duration, and nature of interactions.
- After supervisory review, the agency may:
 - Limit communication to written correspondence
 - Designate a single point of contact
 - Schedule specific call times
- End abusive or repetitive calls after addressing the issue.

All restrictions must be reasonable, content-neutral, and focused on preventing disruption—not suppressing criticism.

Threats and Intimidation

Threats or intimidation—explicit or implied—are distinct from criticism or frustration and require immediate attention.

<u>Verbal or Written Threats (Phone, Voicemail, Email, Letters)</u>	<u>In-Person Threats or Intimidation</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not engage with the threatening content.• Preserve all communications (voicemails, emails, letters, caller ID, timestamps).• Immediately notify a supervisor and forward the communication in full.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize personal safety.• Disengage calmly and promptly.• Contact a supervisor or manager immediately.

Staff should not assess threat credibility on their own. Supervisors will coordinate next steps, including assessment, safety measures, and law enforcement involvement when warranted.

If the situation escalates or feels unsafe:

- Follow office safety procedures.
- Move to a secure location if needed.
- Contact building security or law enforcement as appropriate.

Staff are not expected to manage threatening situations alone or continue engaging in interactions that feel unsafe.