

SOUTH TAHOE PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE POLICY (PUBLIC-FACING)

Introduction

Recipients of financial assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security are required to comply with laws and regulations relating to nondiscrimination and the nondiscriminatory use of federal funds. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, the South Tahoe Public Utility District (“the District”) must have a policy in place that ensures compliance with applicable provisions of laws and policies prohibiting discrimination in its public-facing programs.

Purpose and Scope

The South Tahoe Public Utility District (“the District”) is committed to providing service to the public without discrimination in accordance with federal civil rights laws. It is the purpose of this policy to establish a framework for taking reasonable steps to ensure equal public access to all services provided by the District, ensure nondiscrimination and the nondiscriminatory use of federal funds, and establish a method to receive and investigate allegations of discrimination from the public while ensuring compliance with reporting requirements related to this policy when receiving federal financial assistance.

Policy

The District complies with all applicable federal civil rights laws and is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

This includes compliance with:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (as applicable)
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- EPA’s nondiscrimination regulations at 40 CFR Part 7

This policy applies to all District Operations.

For all programs and projects funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the District provides the following assurances:

- The District agrees to comply with 40 CFR Part 7 and all applicable civil rights statutes as a condition of receiving EPA financial assistance.
- The District will not discriminate in any program or activity funded by EPA assistance.
- The District will take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access for persons with limited English proficiency.
- The District will provide equal access to services and benefits, including infrastructure improvements funded through EPA grants.
- The District will maintain compliance records, including demographic data where required, and cooperate with EPA compliance reviews and investigations.
- The District will notify beneficiaries, applicants, and employees of their rights under federal nondiscrimination laws.

This assurance is binding on the District and all contractors, subcontractors, and subrecipients.

Prohibited Discrimination

The District prohibits discrimination based on:

- Race
- Color
- National origin (including limited English proficiency)
- Sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity)
- Age
- Disability

This prohibition includes both intentional discrimination and practices that have a discriminatory effect.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

The District provides meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) at no cost. The District uses the EPA-recommended four factor analysis for LEP access:

1. Proportion of LEP Persons: The District reviews Census and local data to identify language needs.
2. Frequency of Contact: The District evaluates how often LEP individuals interact with services.
3. Nature and Importance of Service: Water and sewer services are essential; therefore, access is critical.
4. Resources Available and Costs: The District balances meaningful access with available resources.

Language Assistance Services

The District provides the following language assistance services:

- Free oral interpretation services
- Translation of vital documents
- Multilingual signage where appropriate

District staff are trained to recognize LEP needs, access interpreter services, and to provide respectful and effective communication.

The District informs the public of language services by posting notices on its website, including statements in billing materials, and displaying signage in public office.

This LEP Plan is reviewed periodically and updated based on demographic changes, community feedback, and program changes. Additionally, the District maintains records of LEP service requests, languages requested, and actions taken to ensure meaningful access.

Disability Access

The District complies with the ADA and Section 504, and provides reasonable accommodations upon request. The District's public facilities and communications are accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Public Participation

The District ensures inclusive public participation by taking the following steps:

1. Providing advanced notice of public meetings and workshops.
2. Offering language and disability accommodations upon request.
3. Holding meetings in accessible locations.
4. Providing all documents hosted on the District's website in an accessible format or making accessible alternatives available.

Complaint Process

Any person who believes they have been subjected to discrimination may file a complaint. The District designates a Civil Rights Coordinator responsible for compliance, training, and reporting.

Complaints must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination.

Submit Complaints To:

Civil Rights Coordinator: Andrea Salazar
South Tahoe Public Utility District
1275 Meadow Crest Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
530.543.6211
asalazar@stpud.us

Complaints may also be filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of External Civil Rights Compliance.

Please see Appendix A for the Grievance Procedures and Complaint Form.

Prohibition Against Retaliation

The District and its employees may not intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or access to services and programs because the individual has made a complaint regarding a violation of this policy, testified, assisted or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing. This policy shall be made available to any individual alleging such harassment or intimidation, and the complainant shall be informed of their right to file a complaint with the District and provided with the contact information for the Civil Rights Coordinator.

This policy is publicly available on the District website (www.stpud.us) and at the District's administrative offices located at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe, California 96150.

Appendix A: Grievance Procedures for Processing Complaints of Discrimination and Civil Rights Complaint Form

The South Tahoe Public Utility District (District) has established the following grievance procedures to ensure the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging discrimination in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

These grievance procedures will be available in alternative formats upon request and translated into other languages as needed. The procedures will be posted on the District's website and available at public offices.

Right to File a Complaint

Any person who believes they have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), sex, age, or disability may file a complaint.

Complaints must be filed within 180 calendar days of the alleged discriminatory act. This timeframe may be extended by the District for good cause.

Filing a Complaint

Complaints may be submitted in writing, by email, by mail, or verbally (which will be reduced to writing by District staff upon request).

Complaints should include the following:

- Name, address, and contact information of the complainant
- Description of the alleged discriminatory act(s)
- Date(s) of occurrence
- Identification of the program, department, or individual(s) involved
- Any supporting documentation

Complaints should be submitted to:

Civil Rights Coordinator

Andrea Salazar, Chief Financial Officer
South Tahoe Public Utility District

1275 Meadow Crest Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
530.543.6211
asalazar@stpud.us

Acknowledgment of Complaint

The District will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 10 business days. The acknowledgment will include:

- Confirmation of receipt
- Summary of the complaint
- Explanation of the investigation process
- Contact information for the assigned investigator

Initial Review and Acceptance

Within 15 business days of receipt, the Civil Rights Coordinator will determine whether:

- The complaint falls within the District's jurisdiction
- The complaint was timely filed
- Additional information is needed

If the complaint is not accepted, the District will provide written notice explaining the reason(s) and inform the complainant of their right to file directly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Investigation

If accepted, the District will conduct a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation.

The investigation may include:

- Interviews with the complainant, witnesses, and District staff
- Review of documents, policies, and records
- Site visits, if applicable

The District will make reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 60 calendar days of acceptance.

Written Determination

At the conclusion of the investigation, the District will issue a written determination that includes findings of fact and conclusions regarding whether discrimination occurred. The written determination will also include the basis for the decision and a description of any corrective actions, if applicable. The determination will be provided to the complainant and any relevant parties.

Corrective Actions

If discrimination is found, the District will take appropriate corrective actions, which may include:

- Changes to policies, procedures, or practices
- Staff training
- Provision of previously denied services or benefits
- Other remedies as appropriate

Appeals Process

The complainant may appeal the District's determination within 30 calendar days of receipt. Appeals must be submitted in writing and should include the basis for the appeal and any new or additional information. A final decision on the appeal will be issued within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal, where practicable.

Appeals should be submitted to:

Paul Hughes, General Manager
South Tahoe Public Utility District
1275 Meadow Crest Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
530.543.6201
phughes@stpud.us

External Filing Option

At any time, complainants may file a complaint directly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of External Civil Rights Compliance (OECRC).

Retaliation is Prohibited

The District strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who files a complaint, participates in an investigation, and/or opposes discriminatory practices. Any retaliation will be treated as a separate violation and investigated accordingly.

Record Keeping

The District will maintain records of all complaints and investigations for a minimum of three (3) years. Records will include complaints filed, investigation materials, correspondence, and determinations and corrective actions.

Civil Rights Complaint Form

South Tahoe Public Utility District – Civil Rights Complaint Form

1. Complainant Information

- Name: _____
- Address: _____
- City/State/Zip: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____

2. Person Discriminated Against (if different)

- Name: _____

3. Basis of Complaint (check all that apply)

- ☐ Race
- ☐ Color
- ☐ National Origin
- ☐ Limited English Proficiency
- ☐ Sex
- ☐ Age
- ☐ Disability

4. Description of Alleged Discrimination

(Include dates, location, individuals involved, and actions taken. Attach additional pages if needed.)

5. Date(s) of Incident

6. Have you filed this complaint with another agency?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, list agency and date:

7. Signature

I certify that the information provided is true and correct.

Signature: _____

Date: _____