



Karnataka Forest Department

Office Management and Procedure Manual

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Preface

Strong grounding in office management and procedure is *sin quo non* to managing any public office. Recognising this, the state government brought out 'Handbook of Office Procedure' decade ago. It was last revised in 1976. A lot has changed since then. Information and communication technology brought in a big revolution in the speed and the ease with which communications can be made. Legislations like RTI Act, Sakala Act and so on have brought in new and additional responsibilities. Departmental activities have expanded in size and scope. Consequently the procedures prescribed in the existing Handbook have become woefully inadequate. Pending a revision of the Handbook at the state level, this manual has been brought out for the use of Karnataka Forest Department.

Karnataka Forest Manual, Forest Accounts Code and Forest Code which are of same vintage are also placed in similar situation. A lot of new forestry activities have come into being. However, the procedures and practices adopted have not found their way in these rule books. The idea of revising and making them contemporaneous has been under consideration for a very long time. Finally the revision work was entrusted to some senior officers in the department years ago. The work of revising the Karnataka Forest Code was assigned to APCCF (EWPRT). As the third successor to this assignment, I have tried to fast pace the work. I am happy to state that considerable progress has been made. It was planned to add a new chapter on office management in the revised Forest Code. As the chapter was drafted, it was found to be too big and detailed to include in the Forest Code. Hence it was separated out and brought out as an independent and standalone manual.

This 'Office Management and Procedure Manual' is a comprehensive one. It includes management aspects as well as the office procedure which are Forest Department specific. Prescriptions are aimed at ushering in potential developments in the next couple of decades apart from overcoming the shortcomings in the present system of office management. If adopted and implemented sincerely, it will go a long way in improving the administrative efficiency of Karnataka Forest Department. I have gone through quite a few office manuals of other state governments and that of the Government of India. Useful elements have been incorporated into this manual. I have consulted many departmental officers and staff of all cadres and received valuable inputs. I also visited many offices and personally seen and discussed some of the best practices in office management. I gratefully acknowledge the help and support I received from the numerous sources in bringing out this manual. I sincerely hope that this manual will serve as a wonderful bridge for transiting from the traditional to the modern times.

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Bengaluru
February, 2017

Addl Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
Evaluation, Working Plans, Research and Training

List of Abbreviations Used

Abbreviation	Expanded version
AAO	Assistant Administrative Officer
ACF	Assistant Conservator of Forests
AO	Administrative Officer
APCCF	Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CCF	Chief Conservator of Forests
CF	Conservator of Forests
DCF	Deputy Conservator of Forests
DCO	Deputy Chief of Office
DO	Demi-Official
DRFO	Deputy Range Forest Officer
EDC	Eco-Development Committee
FDA	First Division Assistant
FG	Forest Guard
FMS	File Monitoring System
HO	Head office
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFS	Indian Forest Service
IT	Information Technology
KSFS	Karnataka State Forest Service
LMS	Letter Monitoring System
LPO	Less Paper Office
PA	Personal Assistant
PCCF	Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
PCCF (HoFF)	Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of the Forest Force
PS	Personal Secretary
PUC	Paper Under Consideration
RFO	Range Forest Officer
RTI Act	Right to Information Act
SDA	Second Division Assistant
VFC	Village Forest Committee

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Karnataka Forest Department

Office Management and Procedure

1. Preliminary

Karnataka Forest Department was traditionally a small department with limited set of functions. Government of Karnataka brought out a 'Handbook of Office Procedures' in 1959 for the use of all the State Government Departments. It was last revised and re-issued in March 1976. Karnataka Forest Department was also following the same procedure. However, a lot has changed in the last two decades in the procedures being followed in the government offices because of rapid and wide spread use of Information Technology (IT) and several public friendly legislations. Karnataka Forest Department has also expended considerably in terms of number of offices, types of activities undertaken and also in its public outreach. The existing procedure was found to be inadequate for handling the present situation. Hence this manual has been brought out. It replaces the existing Handbook of Office Procedure from the date it is approved by the State Government. It is applicable to Karnataka Forest Department only.

2. Meaning and definitions

- i. Annexure:** It is document complete in itself but attached to another document as a proof of additional information relevant to the subject or topic.
- ii. Appendix:** It is a document containing additional information that can't be placed in the main document. It can't stand alone. It has to be read in conjunction with the main document.
- iii. Attendance Monitoring System:** It is a computerised system of capturing the data about the arrival and departure of the staff and officers on daily basis.
- iv. Branch:** It is an organisational unit in the office that may comprise of two or more Centres, cells or smaller units in Head Office.
- v. Calendar of returns:** It is a standing list of reports, statements or returns to be prepared and submitted to higher offices according to fixed time schedule during the financial year.
- vi. Case:** Case consists of a current file related to a clearly identifiable and specific subject matter together with inter-connected correspondence.
- vii. Cell or Unit:** It is a small organisational unit in Head Office dealing is a specific matter. (E.g. Land Records Cell, Forest Leases Cell, Policy and Legal Cell, etc.)
- viii. Centre:** These are organisational unit in Head Office which are slightly bigger than cells. They are similar to Section in lower officers. (E.g. Library and Information Centre, ICT Centre etc).
- ix. Checklist:** It is a standard or fixed list of items which need to be examined and considered before a receipt or a file is to be processed further.

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- x. Circle Office:** An office which supervises and controls the working of a few Divisional offices.
- xi. Classified tappal:** Includes security and urgency graded receipts or issues.
- xii. Clearance desk:** It is a place in the office where all incoming communications are received for further distribution and outgoing mails are despatched to addressees. Also called Inward & Outward desk in smaller offices and Receipts and Issue (R&I) Cell in Head Office.
- xiii. Communication:** Exchange of information in writing, by speaking or in electronic format. Oral communication should be followed by confirmation.
- xiv. Confidential communications/papers/file:** This is a paper or a file containing personal information which may cause embarrassment if disclosed. E.g. Annual Performance Reports, Assets and Liabilities Statements, Reports on misdemeanours etc.
- xv. Controlling officer:** See Head of the Office.
- xvi. Correspondence portion:** It is the right hand side of an open file containing official communication received or sent in chronological order.
- xvii. Correspondence:** It means and includes incoming and outgoing official communications in soft or hard copy.
- xviii. Current file:** File containing correspondence on which action is still continuing.
- xix. Dealing Hand:** An official functionary, usually a Group C employee or Group B Officer entrusted with the initial examination of the communications received, preparing background notes and submitting it to higher authorities for decision making. Also called as Case Worker.
- xx. Decision Taking Officer:** An officer who finally decides the fate of a subject matter brought before him/her.
- xxi. Deputy Chief of Office:** An Executive Officer in the rank of Conservator of Forests or above posted to assist the Head of the Office.
- xxii. Desk officer:** An officer incharge of a functional desk who is empowered to act independently to the extent defined.
- xxiii. Desk:** A work unit with a well identified task or group of tasks.
- xxiv. Diarising:** Listing receipts or issues, replies or action due, schedule of returns, officers' engagements, public appointments, meetings etc., by date.
- xxv. Disposal:** It is the full and final settlement of a subject matter.
- xxvi. Divisional office:** A district level forest office headed by an officer of the rank of Deputy Conservator or above and having a defined territorial jurisdiction.

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- xlvi. Notes portion of file:** It is the left hand side of the open file on which internal notes of the office is recorded.
- xlvii. Office Manager:** See Ministerial Head.
- xlviii. Paper under consideration (PUC):** It is a document or paper which is a subject matter of file/case on which a decision is due.
- xliv. Personnel staff:** Personnel Secretary, Personnel Assistant, Stenographer, Driver, Group D employee etc., who assist the officer directly and personally in the office work.
- I. Receipts:** Communication of all forms received in an office.
 - II. Recording:** It is a process of closing a file after action on all the relevant issues have been completed and file is set to be a deposited in record room.
 - III. Referencing:** Citing of relevant issues (letters), documents, rules, regulations, precedents etc., which have a bearing on the case in the note and marking them using coloured paper flags.
 - IIII. Reminder Diary:** A personal register where staff or officers register their date wise schedule of official work, files, papers etc., which are due to be attended.
 - IV. Secret:** Information unauthorised disclosure of which would cause serious injury or loss to the department, government or public interest. E.g. Upset price, financial quotes of tenders, examination related papers, register of habitual forest offenders etc.
 - IV. Section Officer:** An officer who is in charge of a section in the office.
 - IV. Section:** It is a basic organisational unit in the office with a well-defined area of work. It may have one or more staff members, each handling one or more subjects. Sections are common in Divisional, Zonal and Circle offices.
 - IV. Security grading:** Classifying official documents as 'confidential' or 'secrete' depending upon the nature of the content.
 - IV. Support Staff or Sub-Staff:** Group D employees in the office or in the field. They are also called as sub-Staff.
 - IX. Tappal:** All incoming and outgoing paper based communications in office.
 - IX. Technical Advisor:** A forest officer of the rank of ACF/DCF who assists the Head of an office.
 - IX. Trilateral Index:** An abbreviated index marked on the file to indicate the desk of origin, subject matter dealt with and file number.
 - IX. Unit Head:** An Assistant Administrative Officer in charge of a Centre, Cell or Unit in the Head Office.

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lxiii. Wing: A unit in the Head Office that comprises of a number of Divisions, each headed by a Divisional Officer.

lxiv. Zonal Office: Special duty offices of Research, Planning and Survey, Vigilance etc., located outside the Head Office, and catering to the needs of one more districts. Zonal offices are headed by officers of the rank of Conservator of Forests or Chief Conservator of Forests.

Office Management

3. Classification of forest offices

Karnataka Forest Department has the following categories of offices which are distributed throughout the state:

- i. Forest Check Post,
- ii. Section Forest Office,
- iii. Range Forest Office,
- iv. Sub-divisional Office,
- v. Divisional Office,
- vi. Circle Office,
- vii. Zonal Office,
- viii. Training Institutes, and
- ix. Head Office.

Location, infrastructure, business transacted etc., at each office are given in the Karnataka Forest Code.

4. Guidelines for staffing offices

Following guidelines determine the staffing norms of various offices of Karnataka Forest Department:

- A.** Karnataka Forest Department is a technical department. Range and Sub-Divisional Forest Offices where the work is more technical in nature shall be staffed by executive staff. Divisional and higher offices can have a mixture of technical and ministerial staff/Officers. Office work should be shared by both. Traditional office works like establishment, budget, accounts, audit, receipts and issues, record room etc., should be entrusted to ministerial staff. Office work related to forest survey, land records, forest protection, planning, management, plantations, research, evaluation and other technical aspects should be entrusted to the executive staff.

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- B. Span of supervision for any Head of the Office should not generally exceed three hierarchical levels. Beyond this, supervision becomes ineffective and the speed of disposal slows down. Any file or subject matter should be handled by a maximum of three persons namely the Dealing Hand, his/her immediate Supervisor/Ministerial Head of the Office and the Technical Advisor (TA) or the Deputy Chief of Office (DCO) before it reaches Decision Taking Officer. It can even be even less in lower offices. If there are more levels in any office, power and authority vested in the Head of the Office shall be decentralised to conform to the three person norm.
- C. Information technology should be leveraged as much as possible. It can be used to automate routine as well as complex tasks. Drawing and disbursement of salary, payments of bills, maintenance of accounts, maintenance of records etc., are already computerised. More activities can be automated in the years to come. Quite a few technology mediated activities should be centralised at the appropriate level. Human resource requirements should be further economised by making the Divisional Officers as the lowest level drawing and disbursing Officers. In the Head Office salary and establish, Budget and Accounts, stores etc., should be centralised.
- D. As a rule, field offices and lower level offices must be staffed by relatively junior, active and younger staff/officers. Higher level offices must have senior and more experienced staff and officers. Staff and officers posted for office work in Zonal and Circle offices must have at least 7-8 year of experience. Those posted to Head Office must have at least 15 - 20 years of experience. Executive staff/officers can be posted on office duty for only one term in their career.
- E. Officers and all office staff are expected to be computer literate. Each staff member in the office including the executive staff shall be provided with a computer. They should attend to the office work by themselves. Assistance of computer operators shall not be provided unless big data entry or programming is involved. Typists if any should be used as Second Divisions Assistants. Senior officers however, will be assisted by their personal staff.
- F. Actual number of office staff to be posted to each office is dependent on the volume of work. Human resource requirement for each office is to be estimated by applying a norm of 1600 working hours in a financial year for each post/desk. Work load in each office should be assessed once in 5 years based on 'organisation and methods' study and the office staff strength suitably adjusted first by redeployment and if necessary by creating additional posts as may be required.

5. General staffing norms

Subject to the above principles following staff may be provided to different offices:

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- A. Forest check post:** Forest check posts have been established on high ways and on important transit points to check the movement of forest produce. It consists of an office cabin which is manned 24x7 by uniformed subordinate staff. Forest Guards man the outposts under the supervision of DRFO. Each staff member is expected to work on a shift duty of 8 hours. No office staff is provided. Uniformed subordinates themselves will attend to the paper work if any.
- B. Section forest office:** This is a sub-office which functions at the section headquarters in Wildlife and Territorial Ranges. No separate office staff is to be provided. DRFO himself will handle the official correspondence when free from filed work. There are no fixed office hours. Public visits are by appointment. A local Forest Watcher may assist DRFO in managing the paper work.
- C. Range Forest Office:** This is the first level public office. It is headed by a Range Forest Officer (RFO). The following staff members assist him/her in the office work:
- i. One Forest Guard (FG) for office work.
 - ii. One Deputy Range Forest Officer (DRFO) as Head Quarters Assistant,
 - iii. One Driver,
 - iv. One Wireless Operator,
 - v. One Group D employee, and
 - vi. One Night Watchman.

Head Quarters Assistant is only for Wildlife and Territorial Ranges. Wireless operator is to be provided for day time if it is being operated on full time basis (24x7). Night operations shall be managed by the watchman. FG and DRFO on office should have good computer knowledge. The last four posts can be drawn from the Forest Watcher's cadre if there are no sanctioned posts. As far as possible, trained permanent employees of the department shall be employed at the Range Forest Office.

- D. Sub-Divisional Forest office:** It is headed by Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF). One Section Officer (Office Superintendent), one DRFO, one Forest Guard, one driver and one Group D employee assist the ACF in office work. The last two posts can be filled by trained Forest Watchers.
- E. Divisional Forest Office:** It is headed by a Divisional Forest Officer in the rank of Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF). He/she is assisted by one Technical Advisor in the rank of ACF. Office staff should generally include one Gazetted (Office) Manager, 2 Section Officers (in the rank of Office Superintendent), 1 Draughtsman/Surveyor, 4 First Division

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Assistants (FDAs), 4 Second Division Assistants (SDAs), 4 Group D employees, 2 Drivers, 1 Wireless Operator (if necessary), 1 Stenographer and 1 Night Watchman. Each Division is expected to have about 75,000 ha of forest area. Staff strength may be reduced if the Division has less than 50,000 ha of forest area.

- F. Circle Forest Office:** This office is headed by a Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF). He/she is assisted by one Technical Advisor in the rank of DCF. There should be at least one Administrative Officer (AO), two Gazetted Managers, 3-4 Section Officers, 6-8 FDAs, one/two RFOs, one Personal Assistant, 3 Drivers, four to five Group D employees and a Night Watchman. The number may be increased in the Circles operating in Western Ghats. Depending upon the need, additional officers/staff for land acquisition, rehabilitation etc., may also be positioned in Circle Offices.
- G. Zonal Office:** These are offices meant for special purposes like research, working plan, vigilance etc. Zonal offices are headed by Conservator of Forests (CF). He/she is assisted by a Technical Advisor in the grade of ACF/DCF. The office establishment may consist of One Assistant Administrative Officer (AAO), one Gazetted Manager, 2 Section Officers, 1-2 RFOs, 3 to 4 FDAs, 2-3 Drivers, 3-4 Group D employees and a Night Watchman. Much of the work in the Zonal Offices is technical in nature and should be handled by the DRFO/RFOs. Their number may be determined based on the quantum of work load. Executive staff located in the headquarters can be used for both office work as well as field work. Research wing should have at least one Range Forest Office for each district.
- H. Training Institutions:** Training Institutions are located in different parts of the state. All the units function under the overall supervision of the Karnataka Forest Academy (KSFA) headed by a Director of the rank of CCF. Individual Institutes are headed by DCF/ACF rank officers. If headed by Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, head of the training institute will be called as Deputy Director and if headed by a Karnataka State Forest Service (KSFS) officer, he/she will be called as Principal. IFS Officers working as faculty in KSFA will be called as Joint Directors. Each faculty member should teach at least 3-4 subjects. Total teaching in a year should not be less than 300 hours. Tour should not be less than 100 days in a year. 40-60 trainees constitute one batch. Based on this criteria and the average annual number of trainees at each training centre, the faculty strength will be determined. Of the total faculty required, at least 60% should be permanent teaching faculty drawn from the department or on deputation from other departments. Each training institute should have sufficient number of Faculty Members of appropriate cadre. One or two RFOs will manage and maintain the infrastructure and the study tours/field trips. Support staff includes required number of Physical Education Instructors/Coaches (one for one batch of induction trainees), one Librarian, one IT Manager, one Gazetted Manager, two

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Section Officers, 3-4 FDAs, sufficient number of Drivers, Group D employees etc., for each training centre. The number of each cadre shall be determined by the annual average number of trainings conducted, available infrastructure etc. Collectively all the training institutions should meet the training needs of the department as per the State Training Policy read with the Central guidelines on technical training of staff and officers.

- I. **Head Office:** Head Office (HO) is matrix organisation having vertical as well as horizontal connectivity. Its structure, staffing and functioning shall be as follows:
 - i. HO is led by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Head of Forest Force (PCCF & HoFF). There are several constituent offices in HO which are not unequal in size and their role. A constituent office may be called as a Wing, Centre or Cell. Offices controlling Divisional, Zonal and Circle Forest Offices are called as Wings. Each Wing is headed by a PCCF. Within the office, each Wing may have two or more Branches, each one handling a definite task. Each Branch may have one or more sections. Offices doing a large volume of somewhat autonomous work (e.g. Training, recruitment, infrastructure development, evaluation, ICT applications, publicity and extension) are called centres. They are headed by officers of the rank of Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF). Offices which are relatively small but doing highly specialised work are called Cells (e.g. forest leases, industrial licensing, Sakala, RTI, Legal Advice, procurements, protocol). They are headed by officers of the rank of CCF. Heads of constituent offices work according to the powers delegated to them and report to the PCCF (HoFF).
 - ii. HO shall work on Desk Officer System to ensure efficient functioning. A distinct item of work shall be entrusted to a functional desk headed by Desk Officer. Groups B Ministerial Officers in the rank of Gazetted Managers are expected to work as Desk Officers. Two or more functional desks constitute a Unit Office. Each Unit Office is headed by an Assistant Administrative Officer (AAO). Each Centre or Branch will be headed by an Administrative Officer. Each Wing will be supervised by one Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO in turn will work under the guidance of a Deputy Chief of Office who may be a CF/CCF. Officers of appropriate rank from other departments may be drawn on deputation/outsourcing basis and drafted for specialised tasks like public relation, budget & accounts, legal advice, information technology etc.
 - iii. Nature and magnitude of transactions vary widely across the Unit Offices. Hence the required number of staff and officers can't be fixed with certainty. Overall there should be sufficient numbers of Desk Officers, AAOs, AOs and CAOs to handle the office work and dispose them within the prescribed time limit. Where technical work

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is involved RFOs, ACFs or specialist staff/officers can substitute equivalent ministerial cadres. For all practical purposes, HO will act as one office. There shall be no transfers within HO but only redistribution. Single file system of working will be followed while dealing with any issue/subject. Head of the Budget & Accounts Office will be the Drawing and Disbursing Officer on behalf of all the constituent offices.

J. Scale of Personal Staff to Officers: Senior officers have to balance their time between tours and inspections, routine office management, monitoring the work of their subordinates closely, meeting public, attending to numerous meetings convened at several levels in the government and. To facilitate this, the officers will be entitled for Personal Staff on the following scale:

Sl no	Rank of the Officer	Personal staff entitlement
1	PCCF	One Gazetted PS and one PS, one Jamedar, one Attender and one Driver
2	APCCF	One Gazetted PS, One Jamedar, one Attender and one Driver
3	CCF	PS, one Attender and one Driver
4	CF	PA, one Attender and one Driver
5	DCF	Stenographer, one peon and one Driver

K. Scale of Group D employees shall be 1 person for 7 office staff. This is in addition to the personal staff of officers. All offices should be given security by Night Watchmen. All cadres of staff and officers including Group D shall be trained appropriately and deployed.

6. Furnishing of offices

Every ministerial staff member shall be provided with an office table big enough to accommodate a desk top computer and also provide space for handling the files; comfortable chair and sufficient shelf space with lock and key for storing the files and records. Ministerial Heads, Group B and A officers (on office duty) are entitled for a cabin, an executive office table and chair for own use and a few visitors chairs. Every staff member (except Group D) shall be provided with a computer connected to a common printer. Officers will be provided with lap tops and mini printers. All computers should be connected to Local Area Network. There shall be one photo copier for each office. All Range Offices and above should be connected by a landline phone. Divisional offices and above must have intercom connecting all office functionaries. If there is only one landline telephone, it must be located at the Help Desk and connected to the intercom. In higher offices, additional direct lines if permitted by the state government may be provided to the officers' chambers through the PS/PA. Officers will also be provided with departmental mobile phones as per government norms. CCFs and above are entitled to have a furnished lounge for receiving important visitors. They are also entitled for a TV set and AC unit for their chambers. Meeting or conference halls shall be furnished with comfortable tables, chairs, overhead projectors, audio visual system, a service room

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for handling refreshments etc. Small Generators may be installed to provide standby power supply to computers, essential lighting, wireless, lifts and other vital equipment. The list of furniture and fixtures must be entered in a permanent Furniture and Fixtures Register. Format of the register shall be as under:

Furniture and Fixtures Register										
Office of -----										
Name of the office building	Room/ Location	List of fixtures	Date of purchase	Cost	Present condition	List of Furniture	Date of purchase	Cost	Present Condition	Remarks

7. Seating arrangements

As far as possible Office Manager and staff should be seated in a common hall with clear visibility across the hall. Executive staff may be seated in separate rooms in groups or teams. Officers should be given independent chambers with attached toilets. Cabin for the PS/ PA, visitors waiting lounge etc., should be located close to the officer’s chamber. Toilets for men and women should be separate and located outside the building or towards the well ventilated end of the office building.

8. Office working hours

Like other state government offices, all forest offices shall work from 10 AM till 5.30 PM with 45 minute lunch break from 1.30 to 2.15 PM on working days. If and when the state government changes the office timings, working hours shall be changed accordingly. All Checking gates, Territorial and Wildlife Range and Divisional Offices, Forest Mobile Squads, Vigilance Offices and the Control Room at Head Office must remain open 24X7. Arrangements for working on holidays shall be made by the respective Heads of Offices. Staff and officers wanting to work on holidays or start early and work till late in the evenings can do so by keeping the Office Manager and the security/watchman informed in advance. Heads of the Offices may require the presence of subordinates before or beyond the normal office hours and on holidays also if there is any exigency. If called, subordinates must attend to duties any time. For working on holidays, office staff will be entitled for compensatory holidays. Those on protection duty will not get compensatory holidays but are entitled for allowances at the rates approved by the state government.

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9. Managing routine office chores

Day to day office management involves a number of routine chores as below:

A. Security of the office premises: It shall be ensured by adopting the following steps:

- i. The Estate Officer is responsible for making necessary security arrangements. Generally Group D employees shall be given the responsibility of watch and ward of the office premises. A suitable watchman's quarters should be built at a vantage location within the office premises for stay with his family. He is responsible for watching the premises 24x7. Head of the Office must take sufficient precautions to provide safe and secure storage of weapons, Sandal Wood, computers, and other valuables. Additional security must be provided when offenders are lodged in lock up.
- ii. In respect of group offices located within the same premises or inside a building complex, watch and ward responsibility shall be outsourced to a competent Security Agency as per the procedure laid down in Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act, 1999 and Rules, 2000. The number and type of personnel may be determined based on the valuables to be guarded. A separate security outpost shall be built in a suitable location and given for their use. They shall provide day and night security to the entire campus including offices.
- iii. Office keys will be deposited overnight with the Office Manager or with a responsible office functionary nominated by the Head of the Office after the close of the day and picked up the next day. Watchman/Security Staff should open the office by 8 AM, stand guard and get the office interiors cleaned and keep it ready for use by 9.30 AM. After cleaning the offices, surrounding of the premises should be cleaned and kept free from weeds, garbage etc.
- iv. In the evening, Watchman/Security Staff should take charge of the office by 6 PM. After all the officers/staff left the office, he will switch off all lights, fans, electrical and electronic appliances except surveillance cameras; close running taps, doors and windows and lock each room and also the main gate to the office. Keys will be deposited at the designated place. Watchman/Security Staff should ensure that no one enters the premises after the office is closed for the night.
- v. Watchman/Security Agency should make every effort to prevent any untoward incidents. Suspicious movement of persons or occurrence of strange events should be reported to the Office Manager/Head of the Office without any loss of time. Further action as deemed fit will be taken as per their instructions. Serious cases should be given to police for investigation and prosecution.

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- vi. Heads of Offices should periodically review the security arrangement from time to time. They must invariably inspect office premises at the time of office inspection and ensure that the arrangement for the safety and security of office premises are adequate.
 - vii. More elaborate security arrangements shall be done in Sandal Kotis and timber depots as prescribed in the Karnataka Forest Code.
- B. Cleaning and hygiene:** Arrangements shall be made on outsourcing basis for cleaning inside the office building, mopping the floor, cleaning toilets, disposing garbage appropriately and keeping the surroundings clean and hygienic. Sweepers and cleaners are allowed to enter the officers' rooms in the presence of Watchman/Security Staff only. Open space around the office building shall be cleared of weeds and debris as and when necessary. Burning debris close to the office building is prohibited. Head of the office shall make necessary arrangement for clearing the seizures like wood, vehicles, mineral ore, sand, broken furniture, discarded equipment etc., from time to time, get the premises cleaned and keep it tidy and clean. No room in the office or any part of the office premises shall be used as permanent junk yard. Tidiness and cleanliness of the office is to be ensured by RFOs and ACF in their respective offices. Ministerial Head of office will take care of it in Divisional/Zonal/Circle offices. If the premises are common, jurisdictional Territorial RFO will take care of security, cleanliness, lighting, water supply, maintenance of office buildings, roads, municipal taxes etc. Estate Officer will do so in Head Office. Personal staff (Group D) will be responsible for keeping the officers' chambers clean and neat at all times.
- C. Pest control:** Offices are prone for pests like rodents, cockroaches, silver fish, mosquitoes etc. Feral pigs, dogs, cattle etc., are not uncommon on the open premises. Honey bees and pigeons can be problematic in multi-storied buildings. Rodents cause serious damage to equipment and records besides attracting snakes. Repairs/replacement can be expensive. Insect pests can damage valuable books/records and even be hazardous to human beings. The following steps shall be taken to control the pests:
- ii. If rodents are noticed, traps should be laid; they should be caught and destroyed. The underlying causes for attracting the rodents such as food leftover being dumped in waste bins should be checked and preventive steps taken by Office Managers.
 - iii. Offices should not be decorated with too many pot plants and watered profusely. Ornamental plants should be planted on the ground away from the office walls and watered in moderation. They should not block the lighting or ventilation.
 - iv. Water stagnation shall not be allowed anywhere in the premises. Storage water tanks shall be properly covered and protected. They should be cleaned once in six

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months. Drainage lines should be kept fully closed. There shall be no open sewers in the premises.

- v. Libraries and record rooms must be fumigated once in a year without fail. Fumigation may last 2-3 days. During this time the rooms will be kept closed and therefore inaccessible.
 - vi. Honey combs on the buildings should be removed as they are noticed on holidays.
 - vii. Pigeons should not be allowed to roost or breed inside the building. Their entry points should be identified and closed properly with suitable net.
 - viii. Office premises should be kept free of weeds and junk at all times.
- D. Fire control:** Every office must be protected adequately from fire. Crisscrossing electrical and telephone cables, conduits and live open ends are hazardous and must not be allowed. Electrical cables inside the record room must be drawn properly using rodent proof conduits and frequently checked. Inflammable materials, petroleum products etc., should not be stored in the office building. If necessary they should be stored away from the main building in a safe place. Lighting of naked fire for sealing any parcels shall be done in the corridor or outside the building under supervision. Fire places for the preparation of paste or glue shall not be allowed in or near the building. Waste papers should be recycled and not allowed to be burnt routinely. No one should be allowed to light fire for cooking, tea making etc., in the night inside the office. All offices must be fitted with wall mounted portable fire extinguishers. Cartridges should be renewed annually. Sand buckets also must be kept in readiness. Multi-storied buildings must have fire safety protocols in place as per the norms of Fire Department. Fire drills must be conducted for staff working in multi-storeyed buildings once in a year. Estate Officer should ensure that lightning conductor on the roof top is working, portable fire extinguishers are installed at all the vantage points and fire escape stairways are easily approachable and usable during emergencies.

- E. Preventing theft:** Every staff member is responsible for the protection of files, registers, books, stores, equipment, tools, stocks, important files, and documents etc., given to his or her custody. They must be kept under lock and key overnight. Adequate precautions must be taken against theft of valuables by each staff member. Sweepers and cleaners are allowed to enter the office rooms where valuables are stored only under the supervision of office staff concerned. For any loss, the staff members concerned will be held responsible. Responsibility for preventing theft of computers, printers, equipment, valuable like sandal, important files, stationery etc., after the working hours however lies squarely with the security staff.

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F. Weed control: Open spaces around the offices should be kept clear of weeds. Weeding should be done by the Watchman as often as necessary to improve the visibility of seizures stacked around the office and to reduce the pollen load in the air and resulting allergies etc. If there is no Watchman, it should be got done by employing hired labour.

G. Disposal of seizures: Any seizure stocked in the open space around the office should be disposed of as quickly as possible to avoid scenes of dilapidation. Seized vehicles, materials caught in legal wrangles etc., should be moved to closed shed, labelled properly and preserved.

10. Personnel management

Personnel management is an important function. It shall be done using the following methods:

A. Regulating attendance

- i. Range and Sub-Divisional offices shall maintain an Attendance Register (in standard format) in which office staff and officers will mark their attendance daily and enter the time also. The register will be with the Head of the Office and he/she will watch the timely attendance of staff.
- ii. Divisional and all higher offices must have biometric attendance monitoring system in place. It must be connected to the intranet portal of the departmental website so that attendance can be monitored by the officers on the network from anywhere and at any time. All permanent employees (from Group D to Head of the Office) should mark attendance on the system daily on all the working days. 15 minute grace time is allowed in towns and 30 minutes in cities. The system should be used to ensure punctuality in attending to office. Biometric entries are the basis for maintaining leave account and drawing salary.
- iii. In Range and Sub-Divisional Offices, officers must monitor staff attendance by any appropriate means. In other offices, Ministerial Head is responsible for monitoring of attendance. If any subordinate is delayed by more than the grace period allowed on three occasions in a month, or if the delay is up to 3 hours on a single day, half day casual leave and if it exceeds 3 hours on a single day full day casual leave shall be deducted. If casual leave is not in credit, earned leave may be deducted. If that is not available salary shall be deducted.
- iv. Employees working in the office are not expected to leave the office during working hours. If they have to go out on office work or for personal reasons, prior permission must be obtained from the Controlling Officer or the Ministerial Head. Movement should be recorded on the biometric system. If there is no such system entries should be made in the Movement Register. Format of the register shall be as under:

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Movement Register							
Office of _____							
Date	Name	Designation	Time of going out of office	Purpose	Authority who authorised the movement	Time of return to work	Signature of the employee

If any staff member is not found in his/her seat during office hours without proper permission, it may be treated as unauthorised absence and action taken accordingly.

- v. Ministerial Head of the office will take note of the delays/absence etc., till 25th of every month and recommend accordingly to the section concerned where leave account is maintained or salary is drawn as the case may be. If the habit persists, the staff members shall be warned and suitable entries may be made in the Annual Performance Report. In addition, he/she may also be asked to compensate the lost working hours by working in the late hours or on holidays.
- vi. Group D employees must attend to the office half an hour early and leave only after the controlling officer has left the office or after office hours are over whichever is later. Driver should report to the Controlling Officer as ordered and work according to the instructions given to him. Drivers should record their attendance biometrically or in the Attendance Register if there is no tour on any day. For tour days, diary of the officer will be treated as proof of attendance.
- vii. Staff/officers can only avail leave with prior permission. Otherwise the Controlling Officer is at liberty to treat it as leave without pay. However, if the reason for absents are beyond the control of the subordinate, absence may be treated as leave of one or the other kind to which he/she is eligible. Spare key of the storage racks should be deposited with the Head of the Office or Office Manager so that during leave period, if any file or record is required urgently, it can be taken out. Casual leave account of the officers and staff must be maintained in a Casual Leave Register. Format of the register shall be as under:

Casual Leave Register				
Name of the Official _____				
Month	CL at credit	CL availed during the month	Balance	Initials of Head of the sanctioning authority
Jan				
Feb				
...				
December				

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- viii. Officers must set an example by being punctual to the office and marking attendance in time if they are not on tour. They should try to be in the office at least for two full days in a week, preferably on Monday and Thursday. His/her availability if office should be displayed in the notice board so that interested public can visit him/her accordingly if they want to.
- ix. Daily wage/contract/outsourced staff shall not be registered on the biometric system. A separate Attendance Register shall be maintained by the Office Manger where such persons can mark their daily attendance.

B. Maintaining staff discipline

- i. Staff and officers must conduct themselves in a dignified manner befitting government servants. Personal and family matters should not be allowed to interfere in the office work.
- ii. Staff should work in silence and with full devotion and dedication. Loitering, gossip, noisy talk and brawl should be avoided in the office premises.
- iii. Chewing pan/gutka, smoking, spitting, drinking alcohol, consuming drugs, sexual harassment in any form or manner, etc., is prohibited. If any one comes to office drunk, he/she must be subjected immediately to medical check-up and disciplinary action should be taken.
- iv. Staff should not entertain visitors at their seats. Visitors should be directed to the TA/DCO and in his/her absence to the Office Manager. Any consultation, clarification or information to the visitors must be given in the presence of TA/DCO/Office Manager.
- v. Group D employees and Drivers must always wear the prescribed uniforms. Similarly executive staff working in the office must wear the prescribed uniforms when the office is being inspected by senior officers and also on all ceremonial occasions. Uniformed subordinates visiting higher officers must always be in uniforms.

C. Work allocation: Work distribution among the available office staff including the support staff shall be done by the Head of the Office through an Office Order. Work load may be reviewed and working arrangement revised from time to time. If necessary, Head of the Office may delegate necessary powers to the Office Manager/TA/DCO for smooth and efficient functioning of the office. Every staff member and subordinate officer working in the office shall maintain an Office Order file in which the orders issued to him/her shall be filed and maintained. Original office order file shall remain in the personal custody of the Office Manager. Staff and officers shall work according to the work distribution order issued by the Head of the Office from time to time.

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D. Issuing oral instructions

- i. Oral instructions by higher officers: Much of the office work is governed by personal discussions with official superiors. Oral instructions to subordinates are quite common. If their instructions are consistent with the law, rules and regulations, they need not be recorded in writing. Where there is variance, they should be recorded on the file by the person who received the instructions. Written order must be obtained from the officer issuing the instructions for disposal of the matter. If the officer giving oral instructions is not the immediate superior but a different officer, they should be brought to the notice of immediate superior at the earliest and action taken as directed by him/her.
- ii. Oral instructions by Secretariat Officers: If any oral instructions are received from the Secretariat Officers, it should be deemed as urgent. Hence, it should be immediately brought to the notice of Head of the Office and action should be taken according to his/her directions. However, nothing should be done without the approval from Head of the Office.
- iii. Oral instructions by the Minister or his personal staff: Any oral instructions or written minutes are received from the Minister, if they are in accordance with the norms, rules, regulations, they should be immediately acted upon. If not, they should be brought to the notice of Head of the Department through the Head of the Office for further directions. Action taken should be communicated to his/her Personal Secretary.
- iv. Group D and Personal Staff including drivers shall be obliged to follow the oral instructions issued by their superiors. If such instructions are not consistent with official duties, they may inform the next higher authority and seek relief.

E. Delegation of certain powers: The following powers may be exercised by TA/DCO or the Office Manager if there is no TA/DCO in the interest of smooth administration:

- i. Granting casual leave, restricted leave and compensatory leave to office staff.
- ii. Approving drafts and signing routine communications to public.
- iii. Signing and disposing correspondence with subordinates on routine matters.
- iv. Attending to routine public grievances and complaints.
- v. Signing salary bills, drawing and disbursing wages and maintaining cash book.
- vi. Signing fair copies of draft replies approved by Head of the Office to other departments.
- vii. Making alternate arrangements for running the office in case of emergencies.

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11. Procurement and supply of stationery, registers and forms

The following rules shall be followed for procurement, distribution and consumption of stationery, registers and other forms:

- A. Purchase of stationery items:** Common stationery items like white papers, tags, pins, pens, pencils, writing pads, note books, etc., which are available in the open market may be purchased quarterly as per the requirement in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Manual of Contingent Expenditure, taken to stock and consumption recorded by each office every month. One page should be reserved in the stock register for maintaining the account of one stationery item. Whenever registers are purchased from market and used, its use must be authorised by the Office Manager with the words, "Register contains --- pages. It is authorised for use as ----- Register in the office of -----" on the first page. Strict economy should be observed in the purchase and use of office stationery.
- B. Printing of customised registers and forms:** Many registers and forms have to bear the name of the department and therefore customised and printed. There can be different levels of customisation. Some can be generic to the department as whole (e.g. logging registers, plantation journals, departmental diaries, Forest Rest House registers) while some are specific to individual offices (e.g. file covers, file boards, note sheets pads). Generic stationery items shall be printed by the Head Office and supplied as per indents. Alternatively, the format may be fixed and communicated to subordinate offices and they may be permitted to print the required registers as per their requirement. Office specific items can be printed locally according to the requirements on quotations and bills paid by the respective officers.
- C. Printing secured books and forms:** Quite a few are secured stationery items where each book and each page is machine numbered, and each leaf is to be accounted for (e.g. cash receipts, stores receipts/issues, permits books, measurement books, field note books). Here again some may be generic to the department and customised (e.g. entry tickets for Tiger Reserves). All secured stationery items which are to be issued in the name of Karnataka Forest Department, even if they are to be customised to the Circle, Divisional or Sub-divisional level, shall be printed only by the Head Office and supplied as per indents under acknowledgement. Printing them at the local level is strictly prohibited. Round office seal of the rubber stamp of the Divisional Office shall be affixed on the first page of registers and each page of other secured stationary items before issuing them for use in the Range Forest Officers. The ICT Centre may develop applications where each page of the secured stationery items can be generated on line with bar codes (e.g. permits). Secured stationery items to be issued by associated organisations like Village

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Forest Committees, Eco-Development Committees, Eco-Tourism committees, Forest Management Committees etc., may be printed by the respective Divisional Offices, stamped with the round seal and issued free of cost through the local Range Office.

12. Purchasing books, periodicals and news papers

There is a Forest Library-cum-Information Centres at the Head Office. Libraries also exist at Karnataka Forest Academy, Dharwad and other training centres. Divisional and Circle offices maintain a mini-library in the office for immediate use. Zonal Offices may in particular have technical books relevant to their area of work. Such libraries need to be updated. Annually a book exhibition shall be organised by the Librarian in the Head Office. All interested officers must visit the exhibition, glance through the books, select appropriate books and acquire them. Heads of Offices taking charge of an office are expected to have a quick glance at the library books available in the office. The mini-library should contain a few essential books, a few periodicals and a couple of daily newspapers.

A. Purchase of books: The following books shall be acquired and maintained in the mini-library:

- i. District Gazetteers.
- ii. Working Plans right from the starting of the division.
- iii. One set of latest edition of forest and wildlife related law books.
- iv. Departmental manuals, codes and hand books.
- v. Statutes/codes of Finance Department, DPAR, Revenue Department, RDPR, Social Welfare, Mines and Geology Dept etc., to the extent relevant to Forest Department.
- vi. District flora and fauna books.
- vii. Forest Settlement Records as bound volumes including original maps.
- viii. Evaluation Reports.
- ix. Text books for reference on Silvicultural, Mensurations, Forest Survey, Engineering, Wildlife, Forest Ecology, Biodiversity, Climate Change, etc.
- x. Glossary of forestry technical terms, etc.

Any other forestry books required for official use shall be purchased based on the need. Only books related to specific branches of forestry science can be acquired. Since it is a technical library, purchase of general books like English fiction, Kannada literature, etc., should be confined to a small fraction of the stock of books. Law books should be purchased from reputed publishers. Old versions shall be weeded out after the newer editions of the same have been received. However one set of such books shall be placed in the record room by the

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Head Office in the record room for archival purpose. If any recently published book is found to be of great use and relevance to forest officers, a commendation about it may be made to the other officers. Buying books in bulk on behalf of others and distributing them to the subordinate offices is prohibited.

- B. Subscribing to periodicals and newspapers:** Divisional offices and above may subscribe to three Indian Journals including 'Indian Forester' and two foreign journals on forestry and wildlife. Subscription to Indian journals shall be paid in advance. Silva's newsletter and 'Myforest' shall be circulated to all the offices in the state up to Range Offices free of cost. Foreign books and periodicals must be acquired through their local authorised dealers or official trade channels. Officers may avail these journals for perusal for about one week after receipt. Thereafter they must be placed on the journal rack in the visitors' lounge till the next issue is received. One English and one Kannada daily newspapers can be subscribed by each Group A officer.
- C. Subscribing to State Gazette:** Divisional Offices and above shall subscribe to the State Gazette without fail. Year-wise volumes of the State Gazette must be archived in the record room. Gazette Notifications relevant to Karnataka Forest Department should be photocopied, bound as a single annual volume and placed in the library at the HO. Relevant copies may be mailed to subordinate offices for their use and preservation.
- D. Purchasing maps and other land records:** Maps are an integral part of land records. They are very important for management purposes. The department does not produce any maps of its own. Topo-sheets published by Survey of India in the best scale and Cadastral Maps published by the Directorate of Land Records, Govt. of Karnataka are the basic maps used for various purposes in forestry also. These maps are available for purchase. Procedure as laid down in the Karnataka Forest Code must be followed for procuring, updating and maintaining forest maps.
- E. Establishing a repository of departmental publications:** Adequate number of copies of any publication or report including documentary films brought out by any Division, Circle or any constituent office in head office should be deposited with the Central Library in HO. Two copies will be retained and the rest will be distributed to the libraries in the training centres. They will be added to the departmental publications and made available to readers/users. The same applies to any books, memoirs or autobiographies of forest officers in Karnataka. Library books, periodicals and other publications will be maintained at each library as per the standard library practices.
- F. Maintaining the libraries:** Full time libraries shall be maintained by professionally trained staff. Mini-libraries have to be maintained by the personal staff of the Head of the Office.

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Books, periodicals and other reports acquired for the library must be entered in the Accession Register first. Format of the Accession Register shall be as follows:

Accession Register									
----- Library									
Office of _____									
Date	Accession number	Title	Classification	Nature of publication	Publisher	Suppliers address	Cost	Hard bound/soft	Remarks

G. Issue and recovery of book and periodicals: Books, journals or any other publications issued to users including the Head of the Office shall be entered in a Library Issue Register. Format of the register shall be as under:

Library Issue Register							
Office of _____							
Date	Name of the book/journal	Accession number	Issued to	Signature of the receiver	Date of return	Initials of the Librarian	Remarks

H. Annual stock taking of libraries: Office Manager will oversee the procurements and TA/DCO will do the annual stock taking. Where library facilities are available, periodicals may be bound as yearly volumes and preserved. In other offices, they may be discarded and sold three years after purchase.

13. Purchase and handling of stores

Stores include items which are procured and used in large quantities like polythene bags or root trainers used for raising seedlings in nurseries, barbed wire/chain link mesh for fencing plantations or parks, railway girders used for cordoning elephant areas, computers, printers, cartridges, mobile phones, wireless sets, survey equipment like GPS, furniture for the office, arms and ammunition, tranquiliser guns etc., constitute stores. Stores required in bulk or expensive items must be planned and procured in accordance with the provisions of Karnataka Forest Accounts Code, Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act (1999) and Rules (2000), and the Manual of Contingent Expenditure, 1958. One page should be reserved for maintaining the account of each store item. Head of the office should make arrangements for verifying the stores, stocks, plants, materials, furniture, equipment etc., once in a year in the month of April. In case of transfer, the staff in charge of store should see that the stores in his/her custody are accounted properly and handed over correctly to his/her successor and a proper receipt is obtained and filed.

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14. Visitor management and service quality

Citizens visit public offices for various purposes and reasons. Unregulated public visits may affect the routine office work and may not be very fruitful in terms of outcome. The following procedure shall be adopted for facilitating the public visits:

- A. Help Desks:** All Divisional Offices, Circle Offices and the Head Office should have Help Desks set up at the main entrance to the office. It should be manned by a knowledgeable staff member with at least 5-6 year of experience in the department. It should have a telephone connection also. Help Desk should have a storage-cum-display counter where information on the services provided to the public, relevant scheme/program guidelines, some recent brochures/folders of the department, public notices etc., can be displayed. Sufficient number of application forms must be stored for public consumption. The Assistant at the Desk should be reasonably conversant with the departmental hierarchy, services provided by different wings, terms and conditions, applicable Acts, Rules and Regulations, time lines for delivering different services, charges/cost payable if any, contact details of relevant officers/staff and so on. Any visitor to the office should be able to get nearly full information on a subject of his/her interest at the help desk and get required assistance in submitting his application, grievance etc., and receive an acknowledgement. If the Assistant does not have the required information, he/she must ascertain the same from the authorised persons in the office and inform the visitor. If it is absolutely essential, then only the visitor should be directed to meet the higher ups. Help Desk should serve as an information-cum-facilitation counter. Anonymous feedback must be taken from the visitors on the usefulness of help desk and reviewed by the Head of the Office from time to time. Spare time if any can be used for receipts/despatch work.
- B. Visiting hours:** Public who are not content with the response from the Help Desk or those who want to interact with senior functionaries are entitled to visit forest offices and meet the TA/DCO or the Office Manager between 3.00 to 5.30 PM every day. A notice board displaying the visiting hours should be displayed at the entrance to the office and also at other prominent places. No prior appointment is necessary. During these hours visitors shall be given preference over office work and no one should be made to wait. Visitors should not be allowed to go into the office meet individual Dealing Hands/Desk Officers. Rather they should be heard and disposed by the TA/DCO/Office Manager in their cabin/chamber. If necessary, the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers could be consulted or made to be physically present during the discussions.
- C. Meetings with Head of the Office:** Heads of Offices must reserve every Monday to be in the office so that public can meet him/her and make their oral or written submissions. No meetings or tours should be fixed on this day. Only light office work can be taken up.

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Maximum time should be devoted to meeting the visitors to the office. If for any reasons the Head of the Office was not available on the appointed day, TA/DCO should attend to the visitors for the whole day and brief the Head of the Office. If visitors could not be attended to on Monday, Head of the Office must do so on the next Thursday without fail. Papers submitted and grievances/suggestions/requests etc., made in person by the public should get his/her due attention and should receive priority in disposal. Serious visitors should take prior appointment for achieving better outcome.

D. Dealing with elected representatives: Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly/Council, other elected representatives and respectable local citizens, if they seek an appointment, it shall be given immediately. As far as possible, Head of the Office must personally attend to them. They should be treated with courtesy and not made to wait. Officers should carefully listen to what they say, apprise them of the relevant rules and regulations and extend all possible help in accordance with the law and in their own best judgment. MPs and MLA should be seen off by the Officers. Such visitors are expected to maintain their dignity, give due respect to officers and not interfere with the administration.

E. Maintaining Visitors' Register: A Visitors' Registers shall be maintained at the Help Desk in the following format:

Visitors Register						
Office of: _____						
Date	Name and contact address of the visitor	Time of visit	Purpose of visit	Signature of the visitor	Action to be taken	Initials of the Officer

Any one visiting the TA/DCO or the Office Manager should make an entry in the register. In Head office the PA/PS of each senior officer shall maintain the Visitors' Register. Details of visitors including his contact address and mobile phone number should be entered in this registers chronologically along with the purpose of the visit. The officer entertaining the visitors must give specific instructions in the register itself about the action to be taken. PA/PS/TA/DCO/Office Manager will instruct the Dealing Hands concerned suitably and ensure that these instructions are complied with. Head of the Office will review the Visitor's Register every Monday and ensure that assurances given are fulfilled without any delay and the visitor was duly informed about it. However, courtesy visits of elected representatives, official colleagues and subordinates, officers of other departments, VIPs and media persons need not be entered in the register. Personal friends and casual visitors should not be generally entertained in the offices.

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15. Handling public grievances

Public must have the opportunity to express their grievances against the department, its activities or its functionaries as freely as possible. Genuine grievances must be redressed quickly to the extent possible. Public grievances shall be redressed in the following ways:

- A. Setting up 'Citizen Charter':** Karnataka Forest Department should develop a concise, presentable and implementable Citizens' Charter in local language as well English. It should be displayed prominently at the office entrance or near the visitors' lounge of every office. It should indicate the vision and mission of the department, list of services offered, service standards, procedure followed for public consultation, grievance redress mechanism and so on. The main objective is to improve the quality of public services and make it transparent, accountable and responsive to the public needs. This charter should become one of the core subjects in all the trainings and should be ingrained into the minds of officers and staff. The department should make every effort to live by the charter and deliver the services to citizens in conformity with IS 15700:2005.
- B. Display of important public notices:** Some Acts, Rules and Regulations of the state government like the RTI Act (2005), Sakala Act (2011), Karnataka Lokayukta Act (1984) etc., may require the department to display certain details on the public notice boards which shall be complied with. Such displays shall be updated from time to time. Public commitment on the timelines and guaranteed quality of service free from fetters should be met fully.
- C. Setting up complaints box:** A complaint box with a glass door, lock and key must be set up near the entrance of each office, preferably close to the chamber of the Head of the Office. Public wanting to lodge a complaint, seek action or give suggestions can do so in writing and drop it in the complaint box. TA/DCO shall pick up the papers in the complaint box on every Monday (if it is holiday on the next working day) and deal with them like other petitions and complaints.
- D. Open forums and public meetings:** There shall be periodic meetings between the departmental officers and general public and stakeholders at different levels on the dates fixed by Head Office. Divisional Officers must conduct at least one public meeting in each quarter at any one of the taluk headquarters in their jurisdiction. Circle Officers must hold a public meeting at the District level once in six months to hear the other stakeholders/clients like community organisations, NGOs, forest land lease holders, forest industries, local authorities and so on. Proceedings of such meeting should be published and shared with the participants of such meetings. A copy of the proceedings should be marked to Head Office also. Similarly the PCCF (HoFF) will convene a meeting of interested state government departments, agencies, research and academic institutions and others state

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level stakeholders once in a year and get their grievances, comments and suggestions. General approach at each level should be to listen carefully to the public, clients, stakeholders and respond to their needs. Problems should be solved to the extent possible within the existing framework of laws, rules and regulations. Suitable proposal also could be sent to the state government on useful and implementable suggestions received during these meetings.

E. Handling of petitions and complaints: Public grievances and complaints may be received in a variety of forms and from a variety of sources. They may be received by different levels of officers. They shall be handled and disposed in the following manner:

- i. Public petitions shall be dealt discretely and thoroughly. TA/DCO in every office shall be responsible for handling and disposal of petitions and complaints. Whether received in the normal tappal or by the individual officers, all such petitions/complaints should be centralised, classified into different categories such as allegations of corruption, collusion, smuggling, forest offences, misdemeanours, delays, service deficiencies, procedural problems etc., and registered by the TA/DCO in a Complaints and Petitions Register. Each petition/complaint should be registered as a separate case on one page. Complete case history should be entered in this page till its final disposal. He/she should discuss each receipt personally with the Head of the Office and get his/her written directions and further action shall be taken accordingly. Format of the Complaints and Petitions shall be as follows:

Complaints and Petitions Register					
Office of _____					
Sl no					
Date of receiving the complainant/petitioner					
Name and contact address of the complainant/petitioner					
Brief summary of the complaint/petition					
Directions received for disposal from the Head of the Office					
Date	Action taken	Response received	Outcome	Remarks	Initials of the officer

- ii. As a rule, staff or officers against whom a complaint is made or who could potentially be a party to the issue shall not be asked to investigate a petition/complaint. However service/quality deficiencies, delays etc., should be examined and remediated by the local officers and staff. Alleged forest offences should be investigated and reported

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by independent authorities like Forest Mobile Squads or by the TA/DCO if there is no Squad. Allegations of corruption, collusion etc., should be reported to the Head of the Vigilance Wing in HO for further action. Issues related to policies and procedures should be referred to the connected office in the HO. As far as possible action should be completed within one month, details entered in the Complaints Register. Every case should be brought to closure under the signature of the Head of the Office and a suitable reply sent the applicant.

- iii. Vigilance Wing in HO will closely monitor the public petitions/complaints and their effective disposal. There shall be a monthly review of the progress achieved in resolving the public petitions/complaints. In case of slackness or undue delay in disposal, Head of Vigilance Wing may review the progress personally or through video conference. He/she will prescribe more detailed procedures and schedule of returns if necessary. A classified report will be generated annually on the nature of public petition/complaints and chronic or glaring cases placed before the PCCF (HoFF) and also before the state government for remediation. A brief summary on the number and types of petitions/complaints received and their disposal should find a place in the Annual Report of the Department.

16. Official meetings

Departmental officers are required to attend quite a few meetings. Meetings take substantial amount of from the officers. The following guidelines should be adhered to in connection with meetings:

- A. Internal meetings:** Every Head of the Office should review the progress achieved in various aspects of administration and forest management periodically. The following schedule shall be observed for conducting the departmental review meetings:
 - i. Review meeting at the Range Office with the DRFOs and Forest Guards shall be held on the last day of every month. If it is a holiday, meeting should be held on the previous working day. All other staff in the Range shall be invited to the meetings once in a quarter and heard.
 - ii. Divisional Officers shall hold a meeting of RFOs and Sub-Divisional Officers on the 3rd of every month and if it is a holiday on the previous working day. Main focus of monthly meetings should be forest protection, management and implementation of development programs. Progress reports should be obtained, consolidated and furnished to higher officers before 5th.
 - iii. Circle Officers shall hold review meetings of Divisional Officers once in three months. A seminar/workshop/conference involving all RFOs, ACFs and Divisional Officers may

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be held once in six months to share new ideas, best practices, urgent items to attend, upcoming activities, new Acts, Rules and Regulations etc.

- iv. Internal meetings of all the officers in HO shall be convened once in a fortnight to discuss progress of works of each office, plan filed inspections, share the observations from the recent field inspections, discuss important reports, government directions and court judgements, share information about the upcoming events and generally update the officers on state, national and international forestry issues. Any standing order or circular to be issued on any subject matter shall be discussed first in this meeting, draft approved and then issued. This meeting is intended to update all the officers about the activities and outlook of the department and keeping all the senior officers on the same page.
- v. A meeting of Circle Officers shall be convened by PCCF (HoFF) once in a quarter, preferably during the third week of the month. Issues of interest must be gathered from all constituent offices in Head Office and included in the meeting agenda. All the senior officers must be involved during the deliberations on common and important issues.
- vi. Two meetings of Divisional, Zonal and Circle officers may be convened at Head Office every year. The first one shall be to discuss the annual programs of works in each division. This meeting shall be held in the month of April every year. The second could be a review meeting or a workshop, seminar or conference on important issues. This could be held around November/December in different parts of the state on rotation basis.
- vii. Every meeting should have a clear agenda. Notes if any must be circulated to participating officers in advance so that they can come prepared. After the meeting is over, the officer who chaired the meeting will issue the proceedings under his/her seal and signature. Proceedings should be drawn for each meeting and circulated among all the participants. A copy of the proceedings should also be circulated to next higher officers of the department. Proceedings of the previous meeting and action taken on the resolutions shall be reviewed before proceeding with the specific agenda items.
- viii. If there are pressing issues to discuss and resolve during the interregnum between two consecutive meetings, the officer(s) concerned in Head Office may schedule video conferences with the respective Divisional or Circle Officers and complete the tasks.
- ix. The temptation to call meetings frequently must be resisted strongly as the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of official meetings are very high. Frequent meetings could dislocate the routine work and also divert attention from important issues of management.

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B. Inter-departmental meetings: These meetings are convened at taluk, district and state level. Taluk and district meetings are held monthly by the District Administration on regulatory matters and Zilla Panchayat on development matters. State level inter-departmental meetings are organised on need basis by various other departments like DPAR, Revenue, Social Welfare, PWD, Power, Mines and Geology etc. Departmental officers are required to attend these meetings. The following norms should be observed while attending the inter-departmental meetings:

- i. Only the officers who have been specifically invited must attend the meeting. They should go prepared with written background notes for the relevant agenda items and after thorough personal preparation. Subordinates or junior officers shall not accompany or attend the meetings except where their presence has been explicitly sought.
- ii. Jurisdictional RFOs must personally attend to the monthly and quarterly progress review meetings convened by the Taluk Panchayat. He/she must also attend personally to the meetings called by the Taluk Magistrate and any other meeting presided over by a minister or the local MLA or MP. Other meetings shall be attended personally only if there is an agenda item that concerns the Karnataka Forest Department.
- iii. Similarly local DCFs will personally attend regular monthly progress review meetings convened by Zilla Panchayat or Coordination meetings convened by the Deputy Commissioner and any other meetings presided over by a cabinet minister. For the remaining meetings, he/she may depute one of his/her ACFs unless there are specific agenda items that require his/her personal presence.
- iv. Circle Officers will attend the Regional Level Meetings if they are specifically invited.
- v. At the Head Office level, PCCF (HoFF) will attend if the inter-departmental meetings if the Chief Secretary is chairing the meeting. All other meetings will be attended by respective PCCFs or APCCFs. Highlights of the meeting if necessary will be briefed to PCCF (HoFF).
- vi. Officers who attend the meeting must take necessary follow up action on the decisions taken in the meeting if it is within their powers. Otherwise, they should remit the subject to next higher authority in writing. If policy issues are involved, PCCF (HoFF) should be kept apprised through proper channel in writing.
- vii. Regular consultation with other departments should always be done through letters, meetings and drawing of proceedings.

C. Meetings at the Forest Secretariat: PCCF (HoFF) will attend meetings that involve Administration, Finance and Policy related matters. Heads of the Constituent Offices concerned will attend and brief the Secretariat Officers in the regular review meetings

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with respect to their subject matters. Officers must refrain from cross briefing and making casual remarks or unsupported claims.

D. Joint Consultative Meetings with the representatives of various employee associations:

Divisional Officers and above should hold Joint Consultative Meetings with the representatives of various cadres of departmental employees and officers once in a quarter and resolve their grievances amicably. Those which could not be resolved should be referred to Head Office.

17. Handing over charge on transfer

This should be done in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Human Resource Management chapter of the Karnataka Forest Code.

18. Modernization of Offices

Offices shall be modernised periodically in terms of staffing commensurate with the work load, replacing old equipment/furniture with new ones, refining and updating the office procedures and keeping the rule books up-to-date. The following methods shall be adopted for modernisation:

A. Extensive use of ICT: A detailed chapter is available in Karnataka Forest Code on the use of ICT and other modern technologies for forest management as well as office administration. The same should be followed. Repetitive works must be accomplished by using computers.

B. Balanced distribution of work among all the office staff: Heads of the Offices must plan in April and ensure that office work load is fairly evenly distributed across the months during the year. There may be occasional spurts in office works due to various reasons. To meet such contingencies, qualified field staff may be temporarily drafted for office work at the Range and Sub-Divisional Offices for one week at time and not more than three times a year without compromising on the protection and development works.

C. Skill up gradation of staff: Increase in the work load in Divisional Offices or above should be offset by streamlining and abridging the processes, deploying ICT to the maximum extent possible, upgrading some posts and ensuring that they are manned by more qualified and experienced persons. Staff skills should be up graded through appropriate trainings periodically.

D. Replacing ministerial staff with executive staff: If ministerial posts remain unfilled for more than one year for any reason, they can be substituted with equivalent posts in the executive cadres. Where there is chronic pendency, an 'Organisation and Methods Study' must be undertaken and office staff strength may be revised suitably.

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E. Replacing worn out furniture and equipment: Furniture made from solid wood should last for a minimum of 10 years. Composite wood/Cane or metal furniture, shelves, racks etc., must last at least seven years. Plastic furniture, tents, electronic equipment such as computers, printers, photocopiers, digital cameras, mobile phones, Global Position System, land line phone instruments, etc., should last for a minimum of 5 years. Life of vehicles, their spare parts and replacements shall be as prescribed by the state government. There is no prescribed minimum time limit for arms, dart guns, scientific equipment, survey tools etc. Furniture or equipment shall be used as long they can be repaired economically. If the cost of repair is likely to be more than 50% of replacement cost, purchase of new items should be preferred to repairs. Upon purchase, old items should be written off as dead stock and sold. For any replacement before the prescribed life time, prior permission must be taken from the next higher officer.

F. Updating Acts, rules and regulations: This is a constant and on-going process. Following procedure shall be adopted for this purpose:

- i. Legal cell in the Head Office is responsible for making any changes to the existing Acts, rules and regulations and keeping them up dated. It is also responsible for bringing up proposals for formulating new Acts/Rules/Regulations. Any officer can suggest changes/modifications/ amendments to the existing Acts, rules and regulations or formulation of new ones. All such proposal should be addressed to the Legal Cell along with a draft of the changes sought. The Legal Cell will examine them and put them up with a detailed note in the fortnightly meetings of senior officers in the Head Office. If the majority of officers agree, the proposals will be finalised with such changes as may have been agreed upon. The matter will then be placed before the state government by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF). Final orders issued by the State Government will be circulated to all officers as soon as possible.
- ii. Legal Cell will also bring out a 'Year Book'. It shall be an annual compendium of all changes made to the Acts, Rules and Regulations in the form of GOs, notifications, clarifications etc. The 'Year Book' shall have five parts: Part I will contain the orders issued by Government of India; Part II will consist of orders issued by the State Government; Part III shall consist of abstracts of important High Court and Supreme Court judgements; Part IV will consist of standing orders issued by the department; and Part V will consist of important circulars issued by various authorities including the Head Office. It shall be printed by the end of March every year and circulated to all officers during the annual budget meeting.
- iii. Once in five years, the Legal Cell in HO shall bring out a revised edition of the Acts, Rules and Regulations including Manuals, Codes and Hand Books incorporating all

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the changes made since the last revision. Sufficient number of copies shall be printed and circulated to all officers. Revised editions will substitute the old editions. Copies shall be placed in all offices.

- iv. Divisional offices and above are expected to maintain at least two or three sets of Acts, Rules and Regulations (one set with Office Manager, one set with TA/DCO and one set with the Head of the Office). In the interregnum (i.e. till the next revised editions are published), the Officer Manager will get the necessary correction slips posted in all the copies of relevant book maintained in the office. Correction slip shall contain the notification number and an abstract of the amendments typed on a separate piece of paper and pasted at the right place.

G. Modifying and improving the office procedures and forms/formats: Making procedural changes from time to time is imperative. It shall be done by three methods as under:

- i. **Publishing hand books:** Some handbooks already exist (e.g. Handbook of afforestation models and practices). Handbooks published by other state government department may also relevant (e.g. Handbook of soil and water conservation practices of Agriculture Ministry). HO should make arrangements for supplying copies of such handbooks to all the offices in the state. The department must publish new hand books while:

- Adding new dimensions to the existing work (e.g. online sale of timber).
- Carving out new and substantive areas of work (e.g. urban forestry).
- Switching to a new system of working (e.g. Khajane II, double entry accounting).
- Changing the existing practices substantively (e.g. Switch to high tech nurseries).
- Introducing new projects, programs, Acts, Rules etc.

There can be many such areas of work where hand books are necessary. When published, copies of hand books should be made available to all the officers in the department. Knowledge on complicated subjects should be disseminated through workshops. This shall be done by the respective Wings/Branches/Centres/Cells in the Head Office. Soft copy of hand book must also be posted on the departmental web site.

- ii. **Issuing standing orders:** Standing orders may be issued by the PCCF (HoFF) on subject matters which are partly covered by the Act/Rules/Regulations but still some gaps remain to be filled (e.g. dealing with wildlife found outside Protected Areas, coordination between different wings of the department, coordination with other entities like Forest Corporations or other state departments, protocols to be observed during the visit of VIPs/senior officers, handling of wireless sets and weapons, dealing

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with notorious smugglers/offenders). Standing orders are particularly necessary if any section of any Act, Rule or regulation is:

- Insufficiently explained to be of any practical use,
- Vague and not properly understood,
- Too complicated to implement,
- Infringes another Act, Section or Rule, or
- Leading to too many mistakes in implementation.

Senior officers concerned with the subject matter in the Head Office should take note of such issues, prepare background notes and the draft of the proposed standing order and place it in the fortnightly meeting of the senior officers. The matter shall be discussed and a standing order will be issued by the PCCF (HoFF) in accordance with the decision taken in the meeting. Standing Orders are mandatory in nature and hence binding on the departmental officers. Every standing order issued is valid till it is amended or withdrawn. Worthy ones may be upgraded as Government Orders or incorporated into the statute books in due course of time. Standing orders issued during the financial year will bear consecutive numbers (e.g. 1/2015, 2/2015, 3/2015...) so that their compilation and referencing becomes easy. Had copies will be circulated among all the offices. A soft copy shall be posted on the departmental website for one year. Eventually they will be added to the Year Book.

- iii. **Issuing circulars:** Circulars may be issued on matters which are already under implementation but practiced differently in different places because the understanding of the subject matter was not uniform. Circulars can only be used to elucidate known issues but not to cover new issues. Only the PCCFs can issue circulars. Other officers can only issue clarifications. Circulars should be brief and carry consecutive numbers for the whole year. Copies must be posted on the departmental web site also. Important ones can be listed in the Year Book.

19. Other office management issues

A. Handling of telephones: Norms for the use of telephones and payment of bills shall be as follows:

- i. If there is a single land line phone to the office, main instrument will be placed at the help desk. Extensions will be provided to the Head of the Office, TA/DCO and the Office Manager. Where there are more than one office lines, a dedicated line will be provided to the Head of the Office through the PA/PS. Rest will be used by

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other officers and staff. External phone lines may be connected to the intercom also if necessary.

- ii. Residential land line phones fixed at the designated official residences shall not be shifted irrespective of whether the officers use the building or not. If not in use, such telephones shall be kept in deposit and reinstalled when necessary. Those who use private residential accommodation can have their own phones and get the monthly bills reimbursed as per the standing norms of the state government. It shall not be necessary to shift the residential phones from one private building to another every time the officers change.
- iii. Each one of the frontline staff and executive officers shall be eligible for an official mobile phone. New mobile phone instruments shall be supplied once in five years. The instrument can be retained as personal gadget. However, the telephone numbers provided for each position in the department shall remain permanent. The number should be passed on to the successor at the time of transfer. A suitable telephone directory shall be published on the web site. Monthly phone bills will be borne by the department subject to the norms fixed by the state government. If officers/staff choose to use their personal gadgets and private phone connections, monthly bills shall be reimbursed subject to government norms.
- iv. So long the monthly bills do not exceed the prescribed ceiling limit there is no need to maintain call data register for any phone. If it exceeds, then a detailed bill with call details must be obtained at the time of bill payment. Call details shall be scrutinised and the staff or officer concerned shall be made to pay for the private calls.

B. Management of vehicles: Following rules shall govern the use of vehicles:

- i. All officers up to the Range level having protection responsibilities will be provided with government vehicles. Other executive officers will also be provided with government vehicles along with drivers. Government vehicles shall be used for official duties and maintained according to the norms laid down by the Transport Department. Fuel bills will be cleared monthly based on the mileage registered in the log book. Major repairs and maintenance of vehicles shall be undertaken through the respective company garages. Petty maintenance may be done in private garages and bills will be cleared based on the officers' certificate. Non-executive officers may be provided with taxis as per government norms. Log book need not be maintained for them so long the monthly mileage does not exceed the prescribed minimum. If it exceeds, log book details shall be provided for the whole month. Charges as prescribed by the government shall be remitted if official vehicles have been used for private purposes. Personal staff of the officers and where there is no personal staff,

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the officers themselves are responsible for economical use, maintenance of vehicles in good condition, recording the log books and timely payment of bills.

- ii. Use of departmental motor cycles provided to DRFOs shall also be in accordance with the state government rules in this regard. Where no such rules exist, the rules and procedures followed by the Karnataka Police Department may be adopted. Forest Guards may be provided with mopeds. Forest Watchers may be provided with bicycles at government cost. Fuel and maintenance charges shall be provided to all of them as per the government norms.
 - iii. Trucks, multi-utility vehicles, buses, rippers, tractors, tankers, cranes etc., if purchased and deployed for departmental use shall be maintained as per the advice of Transport Department. They shall be maintained only if it is economical (worth of the work turned out is more than the total operating cost + depreciation on the capital cost). Ideally, such vehicles should be hired on contract basis and not purchased.
 - iv. If horses, ponies or sniffer dogs are used for protection and perambulation work, rules followed by the Police Department may be adopted for their maintenance and use.
- C. Handling of cash chest:** Every officer who is a drawing and disbursing officer shall have a cash chest fixed firmly on permanent pedestal in the office building. It should have double lock system. One key shall be with the Office Manager and the second key shall be with the staff member handling the cash section in the office. Cash chest shall be operated jointly by the Office Manager and the Assistant. Cash balances and valuables shall be checked and confirmed whenever the chest is operated. All valuables shall be deposited in the safe vault.
- D. Handling of equipment like computer and photocopiers:** Computers will be operated by the staff or officers to whom the system is provided. Printers and photocopiers shall be polled and used commonly by all the staff members. Photo copiers will be operated by a trained Group D employee under the supervision of the Office Manager. An account of stationery used shall be kept by the Group D employee.
- E. Other office or field equipment:** Various offices may procure survey equipment, irrigation equipment, Camera Traps, Cages, so on and so forth. Such equipment shall be accounted properly, preserved securely and used whenever there is a need.

20. Observing important occasions and days

- A. Important State and National occasions like Rajyostava Day, Independence Day and Republic Day shall be celebrated in all the offices with gaiety and fervour.

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- B. Martyr's day that marks the sacrifices made by the forest officers and staff while on duty should be observed at all the Circle Offices and HO in accordance with the protocol prescribed. All staff and employees also should actively partake in the Wildlife Week, Planting Campaign and other departmental events.
- C. Selected International Days like World Wildlife Day (3rd March), International Day of Forests (21st March), Earth Day (22nd April), World Biodiversity Day (22nd May), World Environment Day (5th June), International Tiger Day (29th July), World Elephant Day (12th August) etc., should be observed by organising expert seminars and lectures on the importance of the subject matter.
- D. National flag may be hoisted on all working days at the Divisional Offices and above if the Head of the Office so wish. Every time the flag is hoisted and lowered, a salute shall be given and national anthem shall be sung invariably. Flag shall be flown half-mast if mourning has been declared.

21. Annual Report

Annual Report is to be prepared by the department for each financial year by the end of next September. It summarises all the activities of the department. It provides a brief account of the total forest area, changes made to the forest land by way of lease, release and diversion, protection and management of forests and wildlife, yield and income derived, schemes implemented and progress of expenditure, details of plantation raised etc. These details will be provided Circle-wise. It will also detail the achievements of special duty wings like Wildlife, Working Plan, Research, Training, Vigilance, Evaluation, ICT and so on unit-wise. A general account of HR related activities like recruitment, trainings, promotions, retirements, disciplinary action will be provided for the department as a whole. Template for the Annual Report will be circulated by the Statistical Unit in HO immediately after the financial year get over. The report shall be prepared and submitted by the Circle Officers by the end of August. HO will consolidate the details, prepare the state report and submit it to the state government in September every year. Eventually it will be placed before the Legislature. Annual Report is an important document. It also has high archival value. Hence officers must carefully compile this report and not simply paraphrase the previous years' reports. Annual report must be meaningful, project a true and faithful account of the accomplishments in statistical terms compared to the previous year. The reports should make an interesting reading. Statistical tables and graphs which may clutter the running text must be placed in the appendices.

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Office Procedure

22. Types of official communications

Following are the different forms of communications which may be used while transacting official business in the department. Each form has a specific use and in some cases, a phraseology of its own which should be observed while using that particular form of communication.

- i. Circular:** This form is used for communicating decisions simultaneously to a large number of people or offices, usually for information or compliance.
- ii. Demi-official letter:** It is a less formal communication between government officers for exchange of information or opinion at a personal level. It is used between officers of equal rank or immediately superior or immediately junior level officers. It is used to expedite a matter which has been officially dealt already or to share an important upcoming issue.
- iii. Email:** This is a widely used paperless form of communication supported by internet or intranet. Messages received through e-mail will ordinarily be replied in the same way. Issues emerging from e-mail correspondence will be recorded through a note on the file concerned. Important e-mails may be printed and a copy placed on the file for ready reference.
- iv. Endorsement:** It is a brief noting used for returning an original communication to the sender or to send it to another department or to another office.
- v. Letter:** It is the most common form of official correspondence. It begins with the salutation 'Sir/Madam' as may be appropriate and ends with the subscription 'yours faithfully'. A letter can be ordinary, urgent or express one.
- vi. Notification:** It is mostly used for issuing of statutory rules, orders, appointments, transfers, promotions etc. Information for the public notified through the state Gazette is called as Gazette notification.
- vii. Office memorandum:** It is used internally within the office for calling information or conveying a decision (e.g. Charge memo, show cause notice, passing of a bill or an estimate). It is written in third person and bears no salutation.
- viii. Office order:** It is normally used for issuing instructions meant for day to day internal administration within the same office including allocation of duties.
- ix. Order:** It is generally used for issuing certain types of financial sanctions and for communicating final decision in disciplinary cases, quasi-judicial proceedings by the authorised officers and so on.

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- x. **Proceedings:** This form is used to convey the decisions taken by the authorities having statutory powers or by groups of officers when they formally meet over an agenda to discuss.
- xi. **Resolution:** It is used for recording and communicating the decisions of collective management institutions like Village Forest Committees, Eco-development Committees etc.
- xii. **UO Note:** In informal note between two different offices of the same department located in the same headquarters. It is employed for obtaining clarification, advice, views, concurrence, comments etc., or to make an informal proposal for a certain course of action.

23. Modes of communication

Officers may use any of the following means of communications appropriate to the context:

- i. **Advertisement:** It is a brief communication in print or electronic media to interested persons and organisations about a proposed activity. It is usually carried in the daily newspapers, radio and TV.
- ii. **Audio/video conference:** It is a conference in which participants separated by distance are able to communicate with each other in sound and vision. It is used for education, training, review etc., between people. Audience could be departmental officers/staff or public.
- iii. **Bulletin:** It is short statement or announcement for broadcasting purpose (E.g. Tender bulletin).
- iv. **Gazette publication:** It is an announcement made in the government journal.
- v. **Lecturing:** One person, usually an officer or an expert delivering a talk to several people at a time. It can be to the general public, subordinate officers, colleagues, trainees etc.
- vi. **Notification on the Website:** Notifying text messages, table, images etc., on the departmental web site for public viewing.
- vii. **Oral or personal communication:** Message or information exchanged between two functionaries directly in person or by talking to each other on phone. Important personal communications must be followed by written confirmation.
- viii. **Press note/communiqué:** It is brief write up used to give wide publicity to a subject in the print media. Press note is intended to serve as a source document which may be edited, compressed or enlarged as deemed fit. A press communiqué is more formal in character than a press note and is expected to be reproduced intact by the press.
- ix. **SMS gateway:** These are short messages sent across on mobile phones alerting

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the recipient(s) about an urgent action due, conveying a quick message or seeking information (e.g. Fire alerts, alert on wild animals, messages to candidates taking competitive examinations).

- x. Social media:** It is computer or mobile phone and internet mediated system of allowing people to create, share or exchange information, opinions, visual content etc., free of cost among the networked individuals.
- xi. Wireless messages:** This is a system of orally communicating very urgent and important messages on the departmental wireless system in accordance with the prescribed protocol. Personal, private or public messages can't be relayed on this.
- xii. Writing:** Most official communications take this form. Different types of official communications have been listed in the section above. It can also take the form of newsletters, journal articles etc.

24. Rules of correspondence

The following rules must be observed in official correspondence:

- i.** All communications must be issued in the name of Head of the Office at all times.
- ii.** Type of communication appropriate to the context should be used with proper phraseology.
- iii.** As far as possible one topic will be included in one communication.
- iv.** The contents in any communication must be complete, condensed and without too many enclosures and cross references. Repetitions and unnecessary details should be avoided.
- v.** Official correspondence should always be done through proper channel. Direct communication with officers who are two or more ranks above shall not be done. In all such cases, correspondence should be routed through the immediate superior officer. Advance copies however may be marked to such officers for their information.
- vi.** Communications addressed to officers of equal or superior rank within and outside the department must invariably be signed by the Head of the office. Communications addressed to subordinate officers may be signed by the TA/DCO or the Ministerial Head for and on behalf of the Head of the Office. As far as possible executive officers must sign the papers.
- vii.** Meeting proceedings must be signed and issued by the officer who presided over the meetings. Other proceedings shall be issued by the officer who is competent to do so.
- viii.** Officers of the rank of APCCFs and PCCFs can write to the State or Central government on

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issues dealt by them. However on administrative, policy and legal matters only the PCCF (HoFF) can address the Government. Others should address only the HoD.

- ix. Division and Circle officers concerned are free to communicate with Accountant General, Advocate General, Tax Authorities and officers of other departments directly. But they shall not address the Government in Forest Department directly.
- x. Correspondence shall be Kannada language whenever public or Group C & D employees are addressed.
- xi. Group 'A' officers can use green ink for signing. All others should use blue ink.

25. Emails to be the most preferred form of correspondence

E-mail is the most convenient and effective form of communication. It is an instantaneous communication, virtually free of cost and at the same time allows confidentiality of the official correspondence. Hence it should be used liberally as the first and most preferred choice. The following e-mail protocol must be adhered to while making official communications.

- i. Official correspondence on e-mail must be done using the official e-mail ID provided by the ICT Centre. Easy to remember e-mail IDs in @aranya.gov.in domain will be provided to all the forest offices up to Range Offices by the ICT centre along with passwords. CF Research, Ballari will have email ID as cfresearchballari@aranya.gov.in; DCF, Haliyal as dcfhaliyal@aranya.gov.in; RFO, Shivamogga as rfoshivamogga@aranya.gov.in and so on. Complete list of all offices in the department and their IDs will be posted on the departmental website. They should be used for official correspondence.
- ii. In addition to the offices, all Group A and B officers are entitled for personal email IDs for transacting official work. However, these IDs will not be posted on the website but communicated personally to individual officers to protect their identity. These IDs can be used for more important and urgent communications. Scanned copies of correspondence can be mailed to personal email IDs followed by SMS alert to the officer to expedite replies.
- iii. Use of any private domain (e.g. gmail, yahoo, hotmail) is strictly prohibited for official correspondence. Official e-mails on personal e-mail ID and vice versa are disallowed. Use of private emails for confidential or select official documents shall attract disciplinary action.
- iv. Password of official e-mail should not be shared with personal or subordinate staff. If circumstances need it, the password should be changed as soon as possible. The password of official and personal IDs must be regularly updated at least once in six months.
- v. As far as possible, office e-mail IDs must be used for official correspondence to ensure continuity of the record in the event of transfer or retirement of the incumbent. The Ministerial Head of the Office shall be incharge of the official e-mail ID. He/she will

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personally open the e-mails and record the details of mails received daily in a register in the under mentioned format:

eMails Register									
Office of									
Sl no	Time & Date of receipt	From whom received	Subject matter	Action required	To whom entrusted	Date of forwarding the e-mail	Whether complied with	Date of reply	Initials of Manager

- vi. It may not be necessary to print all e-mails and their attachments. Simple matters which the Office Manager can dispose routinely can be done so. Only important communications and their attachments may be printed and put up to the Head of the Office for his information and further instructions.
- vii. Appropriate salutation should be used to address the recipient. Text of the e-mail message should be concise, crisp and to the point. Extensive details should go as attachments with clear and meaningful file names. Draft document should be attached in editable format i.e. MS Word, PowerPoint, Excel etc. Final document should be sent in pdf format. The sender must mention his full name, designation, and contact phone number at the end.
- viii. Only official language should be used without unnecessary abbreviations, pictures etc. E-mails should be read carefully for one final time prior to sending for ensuring the accuracy (grammatical/ typographical / punctuation mistakes etc.,) of the content.
- ix. All official communications exchanged on the e-mail shall be deemed to be official correspondence. Orders on statutory and financial approvals should be passed in hard copy, scanned and should be sent as an attachment. Such approvals shall never be accorded directly on the e-mails.
- x. It is important to maintain the same 'thread of conversation' by using the 'Reply' tab of the same e-mail until the task is completed in all respects. This will help in maintaining the flow of conversation. If reply is composed on a separate mail, it will be treated as a new thread and the connection to the previous mails will be lost. This should be avoided.
- xi. While replying to an e-mail 'Reply All' option should be used if all others have to be kept in the communication loop. Otherwise, reply should only be to the selected recipient(s).
- xii. If several questions or points are to be answered, reply should be point by point preferably in a tabular format as it would be easy for the recipient to understand the reply. Such compositions can be done separately in word documents and copied on to the e-mail after the text is approved.

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- xiii. E-mails should be replied quickly and without undue delay (not more than 3 days). If it is not possible, an interim reply should be given indicating the time by which a detailed response would be sent. Final reply should be sent accordingly. Time schedule must be adhered to.
- xiv. Secret and confidential office communication must be avoided over e-mails unless there is surety that the recipient will handle the message herself/himself. Do not use group e-mails for discussing confidential matters. However, they could be password protected and emailed. Password could be shared through another medium such as SMS, Phone etc.,
- xv. E-mails should always be configured on outlook express so that sorting of the mails is easy.
- xvi. Suspected spam mails should not be replied. Similarly unsolicited e-mails shall not be circulated to others. Care should be taken about potential virus attacks.

26. Using wireless system for office work

Wireless system is primarily meant for forest protection purpose. It can also be used for sending and receiving urgent communications about office works like calling for urgent reports, officers’ inspections, VIP visits, nominations for trainings, emergency personal messages to staff working in remote areas, urgent meeting notices, monitoring of long pending issues, informing the developments in respect of court cases etc. Messages should be brief (not more than 100 words) and should not engage the system for more than three minutes at a time. It should not contain any secret or confidential information. The message should be first sent to the wireless operator on a message slip. It will be received and details will be taken to the Wireless Messages Register. Outgoing message will be conveyed as soon as possible and the delivery of the message will be confirmed on the message slip itself. It will then be returned to the originator of the message. Similarly incoming messages will be noted on the message slip and delivered to the Office Manager. Wireless message slips will be treated as official communication. Format of the Wireless Messages Registers shall be as under:

Wireless Messages Register											
Office of											
Date	Time	Message number	Type of message (IN/OUT)	Message from	Content	Message to	Time of intimation	Receipt confirmation number	Message conveyed by	Signature of wireless operator	Remarks

Notes: _____

Handling of Tappal

27. Registration and clearance of tappal

Together all incoming and outgoing paper based communications are called tappal. Incoming tappal is received and outgoing tappal is despatched at the Clearance or Tappal Desk. There will be no such Desk in Range or Sub-Divisional Offices. Regular Office Assistant will attend to clearance of tappal also. In Divisional, Zonal and Circle offices, Help Desk Assistant or a separate Office Assistant (SDA or FDA) will handles tappal desk. Since the volume of work is high, a Central Registry headed by a Desk Officer will handles this work in Head office. General procedure for handling the tappal shall be as follows:

A. Receipts: Incoming tappal is received by four different channels namely:

- i. Physical delivery of mail delivered by the local post office constitutes the bulk of tappal. Local post may be delivered by messenger boys. Sometimes public may personally visit the office and submit papers directly. Some post may also be received by private courier service.
- ii. E-mails and fax messages may be received directly by the office or the officers concerned.
- iii. Wireless messages may be delivered throughout the day directly to the person concerned in the office.
- iv. On specific occasions, on line applications may be received by the ICT centre directly.

B. Processing of receipts

- i. Mails are of two types. General mail is what is addressed by designation. Special mail is what is addressed by the name of the officer or those which are marked as confidential/secret. General mail can be opened by any authorised person. Special mail shall be opened only by the person to whom it is addressed. Confidential and secret mails can be opened by the Head of the office alone. In he/she is away for some time the TA/DCO may also open such mails.
- ii. Mails received in every office will be date stamped and entered in the 'Receipts Register' in serial order which will continue for the whole month in the following format:

Receipts Register								
Office of _____								
Sl no	Date received	From whom received	Ref no	Subject matter	Addressed To whom	To whom delivered	Remarks	Signature of the person receiving the mail

Notes: _____

- iii. In Range and Sub-Divisional Offices, the Office Assistant will open the general tappal, enter the details in the Register of Receipts and submit the entire tappal to the Head of the Office.
- iv. In Divisional, Zonal and Circle Offices the Clearance Desk Assistants will open regular tappal, make necessary entries in the Register of Receipts and send it to the Ministerial Head of the Office along with special (unopened) mails.
- v. Head Office receives mails in bulk. In view of this, a Central Registry has been established. Clearance desk shall acknowledge tappal delivered personally or sent by registered post/speed post or by courier. Mail addressed to constituent offices is classified at the Central Registry. General tappal will be opened and checked for attachments mentioned in the mail. If attachments are not actually found, it will be noted in red ink on the first page of the mail. Tappal received whether opened or not will be given computer register number based on Letter Monitoring System. A print out of the receipts in 'Receipts Register' format will be taken in duplicate and the tappal along with this statement will be delivered to the Ministerial Head of each constituent office. Receipt of tappal will acknowledge on the statement as well as on line. Any mis-sent tappal will be returned to the Central Registry.
- vi. List of mails received each day and delivered internally should be closed daily by crossing a line at the end of the Receipts Register and signed by the Assistant handling the. Similarly a closing entry must be made in the computer.
- vii. No mail should remain undelivered from the Clearance Desk on each working day unless the receipt arrived after 4.30 PM. Other forms of mails such as e-mails, fax messages, wireless messages will be added to the list of inward tappal by the person receiving such mails. Bulk receipts by the ICT centre will be delivered directly to the officer concerned under acknowledgement after the due date is over in the manner in which it is desired (soft copy, hard copy, CD) in one lump sum. Backup copies may be retained for future reference.
- viii. Some mails and urgent messages may be received directly at the office or by officers in their personal names. Urgent personal mails arriving after officers might have been delivered to the officers at their residence. Some mails may be delivered in person by subordinates when they visit higher offices. All such mails should be added to the tappal as soon as possible.
- ix. Important communications like Legislature questions, parliament questions, court summons etc., and any communication marked as 'very urgent' received at the clearing desk should be delivered immediately to the office. They should not be mixed with regular tappal.

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- x. Information contained in the communications shall not be shared by the staff at the clearance desk with any one. Nor can they hold back despatch or delivery of tappal or tamper with or destroy any communication in part or full.

C. Preliminary action on the tappal received: Tappal received by the Ministerial Head from Clearance Desk will be quickly sorted out section/desk wise, affixed with the date stamp of the office, urgency graded (as 'immediate', 'urgent', 'priority', 'important' etc.) in red ink, initialled, placed on a file board. Tappal received directly at the office will also be added. Unopened covers will be placed on top of the file board. Entire tappal should be sent to the Head of the Office with a copy of the 'Daily Statement of Receipts' for the day. Head of the Office should go through the entire tappal even if it is bulky because it serves as the gateway to ascertain the efficiency of working of the office generally. Delays can be detected and remediated.

D. Action by the Head of the Office: He/she will first open the special mails and take further action on them as may be necessary. Important receipts may be entrusted to the PS/PS/TA/Manager or to any other reliable person in the office along with a plan of action for their final disposal. The person(s) entrusted with the task will be personally responsible for bringing them to a logical end. Head of the Office will then go through the remaining receipts. In simple and clear cases, he/she will give clear and unambiguous instructions on the left side margin on further disposal. In respect of other cases, he/she may call the subordinates concerned, have a brief discussion and note further instructions. In more complicated cases which require referencing to laws, rules, regulations, precedence etc., the paper should be marked to be put up on the file. Just for information papers may be simply initialled. Tappal should be scrutinised carefully at this stage to detect delays by looking at the references cited, reminders received, incomplete or ineffective responses, unnecessary or avoidable correspondence etc., and put the concerned staff on alert. Then the tappal will go to TA/DCO. In case Head of the Office is not available in the office tappal will be placed before the TA/DCO who will follow similar procedure and dispose the tappal. However, letters addressed to the Head of the office by name shall not be opened by TA/DCO. They can only be opened by the addressee and acted upon as per his/her instructions.

E. Action by TA/DCO: He/she will quickly glance through the tappal, pick up receipts related to petitions/complaints/public grievances; take note of the instructions issued on rest of the papers and pass on the tappal to the Office Manager. The TA/DCO will personally take action on petitions/ complaints/public grievances. In offices where there is no TA/DCO post, such papers will be looked after by the Head of the Office personally.

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F. Action by the Office Manager: Office Manager is responsible for detailed scrutiny and initiating further action on the receipts. He/she will go through the tappal for the second time, take note of the instructions of the Head of the Office and TA/DCO and get the tappal distributed to the subordinates in the office. Where a particular receipt relates to more than one section/desk, he/she should make photo copies of the receipt and note the instructions for each section/desk on the left hand margin. The Office Manager may diarise import receipts and then distribute the tappal to various sections/desks for further action. By this stage, instructions should be available to the Desk Officers/Dealing Hands on almost all receipts. The Office Manager will keep a watch on the response to the receipts and ensure that no important paper remains unattended for more than 7 days. He/she should ensure this by a weekly review of the Desk Diaries.

G. Action by the Branch Officer/Section Officer: Once tappal has been received at the Branch/Section office, the officer concerned will indicate the Desk Officer/Dealing Hand to which the paper is assigned and get them further distributes to the Desk Officer or Dealing Hand as the case may be on the same day with any instructions that he/she may have. He is not required to maintain any separate register or statement but rely upon the statement of the Office Manager and the Desk Register maintained by the Desk Officer/Dealing Hand.

H. Action by the Desk Officer/Dealing Hand: He/she is the final person who is responsible for actual disposal of the receipt in accordance with the instructions contained on the receipt. Even if no instructions have been received, he/she is duty bound to process the receipts as per the rules. As soon as the tappal is received, he must enter them in a permanent 'Desk Diary'. Every Dealing Hand from the lowest to highest office should maintain this diary in the following format:

Desk Diary												
Name/number of the Desk _____							Name of the Staff _____					
Sl no	Receipt number	Date received	From whom received	Subject matter	Ref no	Urgency grading	New or old case	File/Case no	Due date for reply	Date of reply	How disposed	Remarks

Subject specific 'Special Desk Diaries' may be opened when large number of a particular kind of receipts are expected to be received and processed (e.g. jobs applications in response to departmental advertisement, Forest Offence Cases, common periodicals and returns) or when the subject deserves special attention (e.g. court or tribunal cases, Assembly/Parliament Questions, RTI/SAKALA applications). In all such case, the format shall be as prescribed in the relevant Act, Rules or Regulation. If it is not there, Head of

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the Office will prescribe the format. Each receipt should be attended as per the urgency grading and action taken should be entered in the Desk Register. Branch Officer/Section Officer will check the register and ensure timely action.

- I. Letter Monitoring System:** Information maintained by the Receipts & Despatch Section, Office Manager and the Dealing Hand should be integrated through a common Letter Monitoring System (LMS). If LMS exists, the General Desk Diary need not be maintained separately. Details available online can be used instead. LMS should have the facility to query whether the receipt has finally reached the Dealing Hand and in which file or case it is being dealt. The query system should be open to public viewing if the receipt number is known.
- J. Receipts not to be defaced by any functionary:** Incoming correspondence should not be defaced by underlining or by highlighting the text. When attention is sought to be invited to a particular line or a paragraph, that portion should be indicated by drawing a vertical line on the right hand margin in red ink and referenced using a capital alphabet at the time of noting on the file.

28. Rules for despatch of outbound mails

- i.** In Range and Sub-Divisional Offices, the Office Assistant will do the despatch of outbound mail daily as a part of his/her routine work.
- ii.** In all other offices, clearance desk/section will undertake despatch of outbound mails in the afternoon. Any communication to be despatched should be delivered to the clearance desks by the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers latest by 2 PM for despatch on the same day. Mail delivered after 3 PM, unless very urgent will be despatched the next day.
- iii.** Staff at the clearing desk will receive the full set of papers complete in all respects for despatch (e.g. marking the date of communication, attaching the enclosures, page numbering and ensuring that all pages are arranged in proper order). He/she will acknowledge the receipt of mail for despatch on the office copy by affixing a despatch stamp containing the serial number of the despatch for the day, date and time of receipt. Confidential/secret communications shall be enclosed in a secured sealed cover; security graded and handed over under acknowledgement. Office copy need not be shown to the despatch staff. Just an acknowledgement about a sealed cover will be obtained from Despatch Assistant and placed on file.
- iv.** It is the duty of the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers to provide sufficient number of copies of common mails such as GOs, circulars, meeting notices, reports etc., to the Despatch Assistant. The clearing desk will receive all the outbound communications; sort them out by addressee and place them in labelled pigeon-holes. Immediately after lunch, mails

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placed in each pigeon-hole will be taken out, listed in the Despatch Register, placed in a sufficiently big, secure envelop and weight noted along with the detailed postal address. Sealed covers containing confidential or secret communications will also be placed in the same envelop. There must not be more than one cover for each addressee on any given day. However, important documents like cheques/DDs, bills, service registers, legal documents, show-cause notices etc., should be sent separately by registered post acknowledgement due or in an insured cover. In all such cases, the number and date of communication will be written on the acknowledgement card to facilitate its proper filing when it comes back from the addressee. Format of the despatch register shall be as follows:

Dispatch Register									
Office of _____									
Date	Sl no of the cover	List of documents included		How sent			Stamp value affixed	Initials of despatcher	Remarks
		Ref no	Subject matter	Ordinary post	Registered post	Any other			

- v. For inland mail India Postal Services must be used. Mails must always be sent by the cheapest mode of dispatch (letter post, book packet and unregistered parcel) consistent with the post office rules. All mail covers should bear the complete address of the Despatch Desk so that in case of non-delivery, it can be returned safely. Service stamps of sufficient value should be affixed on the covers. Stamps of higher denomination should be preferred. Mail covers should be given the superscription 'On India Govt Service' and sealed properly. In offices where despatch is done in bulk, before sealing, the supervisor should check the contents, stamp value etc., once again and confirm it. All the covers thus prepared will be dropped in the post box well before the last clearance for the day. If delayed, the despatch must be personally delivered at the post office along with registered letters/parcels on the next day for first clearance.
- vi. Overseas mails should be sent through reliable courier services. Service stamps or general India Stamps should not be used in such cases. Similarly letters which are delivered late in the day but are required to be mailed immediately may be sent through reliable couriers services.
- vii. Required quantity of service stamps must be purchased once in a fortnight. Where stamps are in short supply, stamps required for the whole month may be purchased. Alternatively franking machines may be used.

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viii. Dispatcher should keep an accurate account of the postage stamps used daily. An abstract of summary the value of stamps used and stamps in stock should be mentioned in the Despatch Register at the end of every week.

ix. As far as possible despatch must be done electronically by the respective offices to minimize delivery time, reduce paper work and postage cost. Mailing of hard copies should be limited to cases where it is absolutely necessary. For meeting notices or routine administrative circulars, the SMS gateway must be used instead of letters.

Local mails such as treasury bills, cheques, Demand Drafts, important communications addressed to local authorities etc., must be delivered through special messengers. Like all other despatches, it shall also be centralised. Local mails will be delivered once a day. Obsolete forms and discarded one-side printed papers etc., may be utilized for making envelopes for local delivery. Messenger books should be checked on the next day for timely delivery. Format of the 'Local Delivery Book' shall be as follows:

Local Delivery Book							
Office of _____							
Date	Sl no	To whom addressed	Ref no	Subject matter	Signature of the receiver	Date of delivery	Remarks

29. Security grading of correspondence

Correspondence whether it is inward or outward can be classified into two broad categories namely ungraded and security graded. Within the graded category, there are two types namely 'confidential' and 'secret'. Confidential correspondence contains information which is of personal nature and could cause embarrassment if disclosed (e.g. Annual Performance Reports, Annual Property Returns, disciplinary proceedings, Lokayukta/vigilance cases, personal misdemeanours). Secret papers contain such information unauthorised disclosure of which would cause serious injury or loss to the department, government or public interest (e.g. Appointments, transfers/postings, examination papers, dossiers on known smugglers, action being planned against illegal activities, Upset price). Papers which may be secret or confidential until the occurrence of some particular event or announcement may not be treated as such afterwards. The following procedure shall be followed while handling confidential or secret correspondence:

i. Confidential papers should not be mixed with the regular mail or files but should be separately recorded, handled and kept under the personal custody of reliable subordinates. Secret papers are the personal responsibility of the officers concerned.

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- ii. Papers marked secret or confidential shall always be addressed to an officer by name only. Otherwise it will not be deemed to be confidential or secret. Confidential letters could be sent by registered post. Secret letters/packets should be securely couriered or hand delivered.
- iii. When sent by post confidential/secret papers shall be enclosed in double covers of which the inner one will be sealed, marked 'confidential' or 'secret' and superscribed with sender and receiver's addresses. The outer cover will bear the usual official address. Subject matter or letter number will not be written on any of the covers. Entries in the receipts and Despatch Registers should be made based on the information contained in the accompanying slips which should be very general, sufficient merely to admit handling of such papers.
- iv. If it is a packet labelled as secret, it must be securely packed and the envelop wax sealed with a monogram of the office embossed on it at places vulnerable for tampering. Alternatively, it could be put in a locked box; lock enclosed in a cloth and sealed as above. Keys should be delivered to the recipient separately. Secret papers could be properly enclosed, sealed and sent courier service taking due care not to disclose the identity of its contents.
- v. Confidential or secret documents should never be transmitted by fax or by email. At the receipt stage, any cover or parcel marked confidential shall not be opened by the staff. It will be recorded in the receipts register as confidential or secret as the case may be and delivered under acknowledgement to the officers concerned directly. Only officers will open them.

Handling of Files

30. Composition of a file

Opening, handling, closing and recording of the files and registers is the very common and important office work. It is done routinely in all the offices. A uniform system of opening, numbering (i.e. indexing), maintaining, closing and recording of files shall be followed in all the offices. Efficiency of office works depends on how well and systematically the file handling works is organised. The following procedures must be adhered to in handling of files and disposing official matters:

A. Composition of a file: A file has four parts namely:

- File cover,
- Correspondence portion,

Notes: _____

- Notes portion, and
 - Docketing abstract.
- i. **File cover:** It is made of handmade paper in document size, folded vertically at the centre and provided with two punch holes on each flap on the gutter side for tying papers with lace. Every office will purchase required number of file covers, file boards etc., annually. File covers shall be printed with name of the office, name of the desk, subject matter, file number, date of opening, date of closing and other essential details on the face page.
 - ii. **Correspondence portion:** Right hand side of an open file is referred to as correspondence file (CP). This is the place for holding 'Papers Under Consideration' (PUC). It contains all the communications received from outside including printed copies of electronic communications and the office copies of the final communication actually issued. These papers are filed in chronological order and tied together neatly with a long file lace passing through the two punch holes on the bottom cover of the file. Latest papers are placed on top. Unless specifically required envelopes, reminders issued to overcome delay (where just a noting on the relevant page of the PUC is generally sufficient) and draft replies are not to be preserved on the file. All pages excluding blank pages are numbered on top using roman numerals (e.g. 1, 2, 3...). Filing of receipts should be systematic to give the appearance of a book to the correspondence portion.
 - iii. **Notes Portion:** Left hand side of an open file where internal notes of the office are recorded on separate note sheets is called as the Notes Portion (NP). These are document (light green coloured) sheets printed on top with the name of the office, space for file number and page number. Note sheets are printed, kept ready as pads in offices and distributed to the users as required. Each page of the note sheet has borders printed on it (2 inch margin on the top and left hand side and 1 inch on other sides). Note sheet pages in a file are numbered using Roman Numerals (e.g. I, II, III...; Number 10 is indicated using X; number 50 with L; and number hundred with C; and then the cycle repeats). A brief note on the PUC is first drafted by the Dealing Hand in short paragraphs, each dedicated to one issue. Paragraphs are numbered in Arabic numerals (e.g. 1, 2, 3,...). Sub-Paragraphs if any are numbered using small alphabets (e.g. a, b, c, ...). The Dealing Hand/Desk Officer will affix his/her dated signature and submit the file to the next higher authority by marking his/her designation at the end of the text on the note sheet. After his/her noting, the file will be marked to next higher authority in the same manner till it reaches the table of Decision Taking Officer. During the upward journey, comments/remarks by each official in the hierarchy are given in separate paragraphs. After the decision is taken, the file will return to the Dealing Hand/Desk officer in the same route. On the return journey, all functionaries below the Decision Taking Officer will sign in one

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single row marked as one paragraph. Note sheets are tied together neatly using a file lace passing through the two punch holes on the upper file cover. Note sheets are filed from bottom up such that the latest note sheets are available on top. At least two additional blank sheets (called courtesy sheets) shall be placed at the top for continuing the notes as the file moves up and down the hierarchy.

- iv. Docketing abstract:** Docketing is nothing but anchoring a receipt to a file such that it can't be lost sight of in the first place and further work proceeds on the basis of PUC later on. The receipt is taken to the correspondence part of the file, given a page number in seriatim and details are entered on the note sheet. If action is required on the receipt, then it will be flagged as PUC. Noting on the PUC will continue on the note sheet till final orders are passed. This should be done every time a receipt is taken to a file. For checking whether all the receipts have been docketed properly and responded in time, a docketing abstract is maintained on the inner side of the file covers (first on the front cover and then continued on the back cover) in the following format:

Docketing Abstract													
Section/Branch _____				File number _____				Name of the Desk _____					
Inward communication							Outward communication						
Sl no	Receipt no	File page number	Date received	Reference number	Subject matter	Action to be taken	Due date	Sl no	Reference number	File page number	Date of reply	Action complete?	Initials of the DH

At the time of printing the front matter on the face page of the file cover, inner side of the file cover shall be printed with above table in landscape format. If any file cover does not have the above table printed already, or if the space provided is exhausted, the above table may be printed on white paper(s) and pasted on the inner side of file covers and used. Abstract must be updates as soon as a receipt is docketed and whenever a reply is sent. It must be checked at the time of table/office inspection to judge the promptness in response.

31. Type of files

Files can be broadly categorised in to the following seven types namely:

- i. Guard Files or Reference Files:** All Gazette notifications, Government Orders, circulars, directions, standing instructions, amendments to Acts, Rules, Regulations, Codes, departmental instructions on forestry and wildlife etc., which have reference value should be filed in these files. There should be one Guard File on each one of them, particularly in the issuing offices as they constitute 'office of record' for these subjects. All other offices should also set up Guard Files on similar lines. One Guard File is maintained for each Act, Rule book, Code etc. Those issued by specific departments in

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the state government like DPAR, Finance Department, Forest Secretariat, Directorate of e-governance, Social Welfare Department etc., also should be filed on separate Guard Files. An index of the papers filed in the Guard File is maintained on the left hand side of the file and communications received are filed on the right hand side chronologically. Office Manager is responsible for compiling three sets of Guard Files, one set to be retained by him/her, one set for the TA/DCO and one for the Head of the Office. Each dealing hand should have Guard Files relevant to his area of work.

ii. Dedicated case files: These files deal with one particular case only. Case may relate to a person, a scheme, an activity or an issue. File includes numerous back and forth communications on the subject matter which may go on for quite some time. Each case is dealt on a separate file (e.g. settlement of notified forests, forest land diversion cases, tree felling permissions, tenders, contracts, recruitment, vigilance enquiries, disciplinary action, personal files, compassionate appointments, pension settlement cases). Some of these files may run for several years and even a few decades. In the process, the file could become bulky. No file shall have more than 200 pages in all (notes portion + correspondence portion). If it exceeds, a second volume of the same file should be opened with the same title and labelled as volume II, III and so on. But all the volumes should be preserved together.

iii. Group files: A Group file includes several case-lets related to a common subject. Life of each case-let is actually quite short. Very brief and routine action like one time approval is required for disposing them. There may be many such case-lets in a year filed in the same file (e.g. estimates, completion certificates, RTI applications, parliament or assembly questions, forest offence cases, Darakasth files, anonymous petitions, casual leave applications of employees, GPF advances etc). A good number of cases may be received during the year. Creating a separate file for each case is not necessary as it would lead to opening of hundreds of files which may be seldom revisited. Similarly noting separately for each case and linking them to relevant papers on the correspondence portion of the file becomes difficult. In all such cases a single group file should be opened and all case-lets should be filed in that file.

Case-lets are processed based on a standard criterion. Hence a suitable checklist should be prepared for further processing. There is no need to write a detailed note on each case-let. There will be as many checklists as there are subjects of such nature. When a proposal is received, it should be docketed into a buff coloured jacket; given unique case-let number (e.g. Sanctioned Order or SO Number) and a suitable superscription; a checklist attached in place of note sheet and the papers are put up for approval/sanction. Once approved, reply is also sent in standardized format. After this, the case-let file is taken to the Group File.

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Group files should be opened annually. If there are too many case-lets and the file is likely to become bulky, unit-wise (e.g. Range-wise) or scheme-wise group files may be opened. Often, separate registers may have been prescribed by the Acts/Rules/Manuals/codes where more detailed information is to be recorded and maintained as a permanent record (e.g. Estimates Register, Forest Offence Cases Register). They should be updated as and when the case-lets are received and processed. In respect of RTI, SAKALA and any other applications filed under specific statutes, a rubber stamp should be affixed at the end of the application to indicate the date on which application was received; date on which the information/service was provided and the signature of the person who rendered/received the service. Documenting the action taken on each application is a mandatory requirement and such details should be recorded on the application itself for easy cross verification.

A contrasting situation may emerge where many case-lets may emerge from a single file or report (e.g. audit, office inspection, Forest Management Audit, evaluation). The agency or officer who undertook the task may give a single report which comprises of several subjects. Issues have to be disaggregated and each matter should be dealt as a case-let till it is brought to a logical end. The main report or file will remain active till all the paragraphs/issues/case-lets have been satisfactorily resolved and a completion/closure report is filed on all of them. Suitable entries on the closed parts of the reports may be entered on the relevant page of the main report/file. The full file/report is to be closed after all issues have been settled.

iv. Compilation and reporting files: Several statistical returns and reports are to be furnished to higher offices and also to the government from time to time. Information is obtained from lower offices, compiled and final return/report submitted as per the calendar of returns. For each such case, a compilation file should be opened at the beginning of the financial year. A checklist showing the due dates for periodical submission should be pasted on the inner side of front cover. Format of the index sheet shall be as under:

Periodical Checklist														
Name of the office: Due date for receipt from unit officers:							Name of the periodical: Due date for submission:							
Sl no	Name of the unit	Actual date of receipt of the return/periodical												remarks
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apl	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	

Notes: _____

Date of submission to higher office													
Initials of Dealing Hand													

Columns 3 to 14 could be revised appropriately in case of quarterly, half yearly or annual report. Whenever the periodical/return is received, actual date should be recorded in the check list. Once information is received from all the subordinate units, a consolidated report is to be prepared/compiled and submitted to higher officers/government. Office copy of the report/periodical compiled should be maintained on the compilation/reporting file. Reports received from subordinate offices for each term (month, quarterly, annually as the case may be) may be placed on the same file. If that is going to make the file bulky, unit officers' reports may be taken to a different file and preserved till the year end. Compilation file is an annual file. Office copies of returns compiled and submitted annually should be found it. In due course, the department should migrate to a comprehensive Management Information System which will ensure routine data entry and automatic compilation of a wide range of returns. It should eliminate the drudgery in compilation of schedule of returns altogether.

- v. **Just for information file (JIF):** These files contain an assortment of ephemeral communications which are sent or received just for information. Note has to be taken of them and nothing more is to be done (e.g. advance copies of some letters, office orders, official memoranda, Charge Taking Certificates). Papers received are to be placed on the correspondence portion of the file and details should be entered in the note sheet. If too many of such papers are being received in any office, separate JIF files may be opened for different categories of senders or subjects and maintained. These are also annual files. They can be sent to record room soon after the financial year comes to an end.
- vi. **Part files:** These are similar to dedicated case files. When too many subjects or issues are involved in a single dedicated case file, and if the file is held up elsewhere, a part file may be created by picking up photocopies of the relevant pages of the main file and creating another file independently. If the main file returns, part files are placed below the main file till the processing is over, final decision is taken and file is archived.
- vii. **Miscellaneous files:** Papers of purely ephemeral interest from assorted sources (other than government) keep stream into offices. Nothing really needs to be done about them. They all have to be simply filed in a 'Miscellaneous File'. If at all anything is to be done head of the office will issue instructions on the inward communication itself. Response would be sent accordingly. There is no note sheet for these files. Receipts and issues if

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any should be placed together in the file. If it becomes bulky, volume II, III, may be opened and used.

32. Opening and indexing of files

A. Opening of files: Files tend to proliferate quickly as the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers find it easy to put up each receipt in a separate file and move it. This must NOT be allowed. A file previously opened should be continued till the subject matter is fully dealt with and closed. Opening of new files shall be regulated as follows:

- i. A new file may be opened with the approval of the supervisor if the subject is an independent one and further correspondence on it is likely.
- ii. Subject matter and date of opening of file must be noted on the cover page at the appropriate place.
- iii. Each Dealing Hand/Desk Officer must open and maintain a Register of Files in which every new file opened by him/her shall be entered. Proforma of the Files Register shall be as follows:

Files Register									
Name of the Desk _____						Financial year _____			
File no	Subject	Trilateral Index	Date of opening	Initials of the supervisor	Date of closing	Date of transfer	Initials of supervisor	Record room index number	Initials of the supervisor

iv. Entries in the Register of Files should be closed at the end of the financial year. A new serial number shall be started from 1 for the next financial year. New serial number should always commence on a new page of the Register of Files.

B. Indexing files: Each file should bear an 'Index Number' which will help in storing, retrieving and returning the file back to the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer after it moves up, down or laterally in the hierarchy even in a complex office environment. It is often called as Trilateral Index because it indicates the desk of origin, subject matter dealt with and file number along with year of opening. This number is written at the top right hand corner of each file. Indexing is done as follows:

- i. Name of the office of origin is printed on the cover page of the file. If it is not so, rubber stamp of the office shall be affixed on top of the file. First step in indexing the file is to note the Section/Desk number within the office of origin. For e.g. A1 stands for first desk in Accounts Section; B2 for second desk in Budget Section, S3 for third desk in the Store Section, E4 for the fourth desk in Establishment Section and so on.

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- ii. Second step consists of code name for the subject matter using two or three indicative capital letters. For example: ACC stands for accounts; ADM for administration; AUD for Audit; BUD for budget; CC for court case, DKT for darakasth, EC for encroachment, EST for establishment; FOC for forest offence cases; LND for land; PE for petition enquiry, MLK for malki, MSC for miscellaneous; SL for sale; SO for sanction order; ST for stores; SVY for survey, etc. Letter code once assigned to a file should not be changed. If new subject codes are required Supervisor will assign the new subject code.
- iii. Third step consists of indicating the serial number assigned to the file in the Register of Files. It is a composite number and will always have the year in which the file was opened. File numbers are recorded as F1/2011-12; F5/2024-15; F11/2016-17, ... and so on.
- iv. Index number of a file is a combination of the above three items viz desk code, subject code and the file number. Index number is noted at the top right hand corner of the file in red ink. Where there is only one desk in the office, the question of indicating the desk number will not arise. It will only have the remaining index numbers.
- v. Any communication originating from a file should carry the index number. In addition it should also bear the serial number of the communication. For example, an official memorandum bearing number B3/SO/F5/2015-16/3 dated 15/07/2016 means the file belongs to the third desk in the budget section, it relates to sanction orders being dealt in file number 5 of 2015-16 and it is the third communication in that file. This system of numbering the files and letters must be followed by all offices.

33. Three persons rule for file processing

Within an office file processing work should be limited to generally to three persons. Their respective roles are: (1) to put up the receipt on the file with facts of the case; (2) check-up and note the relevant rules; and (3) recommend the course of action to the Decision Taking Officer. Additional hands are actually interlopers. They tend to bring down the efficiency in file processing. There will not be any value addition to the decision. As far as possible, file processing should be limited to three persons.

A. Roles and responsibilities of three person in file processing: Designation and the responsibilities of each person in file handling shall be as follows:

- i. **Dealing Hand/Desk Officer:** The Dealing Hand/Desk Officer should docket the receipt on to the file, reference the 'Paper Under Consideration' (as PUC I, II, III, if there is more than one receipt) using paper flags, make a brief noting about the background of the PUC, mention the action to be taken, sign below the noting and mark the file to the supervisor. Initial noting should not exceed about half a page.

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ii. Supervisor: He/she is responsible for:

- (a) Scrutinising the PUC and checking whether the receipt is complete in all respects to take further action. If not the officer concerned should be contacted, missing information obtained, placed on the file and then the file is moved.
- (b) Checking and seeing if the noting of the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer on the file is comprehensive and presents a true and faithful account of the facts of the case.
- (c) Reference the relevant papers. It is the process of citing connected rules, regulations, codal provisions, precedents etc., having a bearing on the case/subject.
- (d) Stating the questions for consideration and bring out clearly the points requiring decision.

Supervisors must be familiar with the rules and regulations. It is his/her responsibility to ensure that relevant rules and regulations are cited on the file and applied properly. He/she must do the referencing properly. Information for referencing must be taken from the latest edition of the rule books. Second hand quotations should not be relied upon. Decision Taking Officers are expected to have a set of departmental statute books in their custody and refer to them whenever necessary. Therefore it is not necessary for the Supervisor to place the reference materials on the file. However, if the subject matter pertains to Acts, Rules and Regulations issued by another department or secretariat, the relevant text may be extracted and quoted in the note sheet verbatim. If it is too long, relevant pages should be photocopied and placed on the file for reference.

If the matter pertains to recent government orders, notifications, clarifications, court judgement etc., which are yet to find a place in the rule books, a copy of that should be invariably placed on the file. If information has been taken from the material posted on the website, relevant text should be downloaded and placed on the correspondence portion of the file. The web address (Uniform Resource Locator or URL) and date of downloading should be noted on top of the page. Page numbers on the file should be updated if new papers are added to the file. If cited in the note sheet, these pages should be flagged. Each flag should be labelled (as A, B, C ...) and flag numbers should be quoted in the left hand margin of the note sheet. After adding the references and his/her notes, the supervisor should sign below his/her noting and submit the file to the TA/DCO.

iii. Technical Advisor/Deputy Chief of Office: TA/DCO is responsible for:

- (a) Listing the possible courses of action on the PUC keeping in mind the notes

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written by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer and the Supervisor, and recommend a specific course of action with reasons. He/she should also list if any conditions are to be imposed.

- (b) Quoting the delegation of powers/authority by the State Government and stating whether the Decision Taking Officer has the competence to decide, and
- (c) Arranging for file disposal based on urgency grading. If the Head of the Office is available in the office, he/she must personally carry the files which require immediate disposal and get them cleared. If the Decision Taking Officer is not available, TA/DCO must stay in touch with the Head of the Office and act according to his/her instructions.

B. Permissible variations to the three persons rule: The 'three persons rule' is a very effective way of disposing files. However all offices in the state may not have the luxury of having three levels in their offices. The following variations are permissible:

- i. In Range and Sub-Divisional offices, the Dealing Hand will discharge the responsibilities of Supervisor also. The role of TA will be played by the Head of the Office.
- ii. Divisional, Zonal and Circle Offices must follow three persons rule. No variation should be allowed. Circle and Zonal offices may create a few positions of Desk Officers if necessary.
- iii. All Constituent offices in Head Office must adopt the Desk Officer system. Desk Officers are the Dealing Hands. His/her immediate higher officer shall be the Supervisor. The file will then go to the DCO and finally to the Head of the constituent Office for final decision. Three persons rule should be adhered to generally. If there are more hierarchical levels in any office, authority should be delegated appropriately to give effect to the three persons rule.

However files related to policy, law, finance, administration, coordination etc., have to be remitted to PCCF (HoFF) for final decision. Prior consultation with other constituent offices in Head Office may be necessary sometimes. If only one other officer is to be consulted, the original file should be sent to him/her. For internal processing and retaining a record of the opinion given, they may create a part file and return the original file with their opinion. If more than one constituent office is to be consulted, then a meeting of all the relevant officers must be called, issues discussed, proceedings drawn and file cleared accordingly. Head Office will follow 'Single File System'. Parallel or multiple files shall not be created. A single subject shall not be handled in more than one file in the entire Head Office.

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34. Rules for preparing office note

The following rules should be observed while preparing the office note (henceforth noting):

- i. Noting should be done on the note sheet only and not on the receipt or PUC. Aim of noting is to present the facts in brief, convenient and easily understandable form to enable the Decision Making Officer to take the correct decision quickly. Paraphrasing of receipts (copying the text of a letter or communication) should not be done while noting. Only a précis of the PUC is to be written.
- ii. Note should be written in third person. It should be self-contained. Language should be courteous and temperate. Note should be written on both sides of the page without any gaps. No scopes should be given for subsequent, unauthorized insertion. Lengthy notes spanning over more than a page should be generally typed.
- iii. To facilitate rapid disposal of routine or urgent receipts, Head of the Office may sometimes issue written directions on the PUC itself at the tappal stage. Such remarks should be copied on the notes sheet first and further noting should continue. In urgent cases, personal discussion should be freely resorted to. Oral instructions issued should be noted on the PUC. If it is not expressly contradicted by the officer concerned, the oral instructions have been deemed to have been confirmed.
- iv. Notes written by each functionary should bear a distinct paragraph number in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 etc). Paragraph length can be about ten lines. Longer noting by any single functionary must be broken into sub-paragraphs - each one dedicated to a distinct aspect and numbered using small alphabets (a, b, c ...). Similarly lengthy self-sufficient notes (e.g. disciplinary cases) should be broken into sub-paragraphs. Main paragraphs shall be numbered continuously on the file till it is closes. Sub-paragraphs numbers are limited to that para only. They will be assigned afresh starting from (a) in each paragraph.
- v. Note sheets in a file will run continuously from the inception of the file until final orders are passed and the file is closed. Pages on the noting portion of the file will be numbered with Roman Numerical (I, II, III ...) on the top while pages on the correspondence file where receipts are filed are numbered using Arabic Numerical (1, 2, 3 ...).
- vi. Noting by higher authorities should not repeat any of the facts or issues already stated in the note sheet by the subordinates. Author of the noting should sign underneath the text in full and invariably mark the date including the year. A rubber stamp of the name and designation should be affixed below the signature for future references after the file goes to record room.
- vii. Sequence of points in the noting should be as follows:
 - (a) Details of correspondence done till now.

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- (b) Points raised in the PUC.
 - (c) Relevant rules and regulations.
 - (d) Financial implications if any and powers of the Decision Taking Officer.
 - (e) Administrative implications if any.
 - (f) Need of consulting other sections/departments if any, and
 - (g) Suggestions based on the above for disposal of the matter.
- viii.** Relevant pages (e.g. PUC, Further Receipt, Rules for perusal, Draft reply for approval, Papers for Signature) in the file must be referenced using coloured paper flags. Page numbers and flag labels should be cited in the note portion of the file. Once the purpose is served, the flags must be removed. New flags must be attached when the file is put up next time. Files freshly put up shall not carry the old flags as it may lead to confusion.
- ix.** Notes should be recorded after careful consideration. There should not be too many edits to the text like scoring out, erasing, rewriting, over-writing, leaving blank space in the middle, pasting of slips etc. If at all a note is to be rejected, it should be cut out and revised note written in continuation. If the facts or legal provisions stated are incorrect, details should be recorded below the last noting instead of correcting the earlier note.
- x.** Dealing Hands/Desk officers may place a draft reply on the file along with original noting in routine or simple cases or where additional information is being sought. This draft should be referenced in the noting. In complex cases, possible courses of action and the implications of each could be suggested. And final decision should be left to the Decision Taking Officer.
- xi.** A file with fresh noting will go up or come down the office hierarchy in sequential order. It will go to the person to whom it has been marked by the last signatory. If it has to go to more than one senior officer, their designation should be written next to one another, separated by a slash mark in the rising order of hierarchy. File will go up and also return in the same route. No one should be by passed while submitting the file or returning it.
- xii.** If a file has been marked for seeking opinion of another office in Head Office, relevant issues should be taken to a part file, processed internally and a copy of the final decision/opinion should be placed on the original file, a suitable entry made on the note sheet and returned. Internal processing of the referral office should not be done on the main file.
- xiii.** Senior functionaries should not require any modification or replacement of the notes recorded by their juniors. Instead, they should record their own notes giving their views on the subject. It is not necessary to always go by the noting of the subordinates.

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- xiv. If a higher authority raises a question in the margin of the note, the reply to it is to be written in continuation of the note giving the reference of the paragraph and not in the margin.
- xv. By the time it reaches the decision taking level, office note should contain the background of the problem/issues, analysis of all relevant facts, precedents if any, suggested course of action and its implications. Noting should help the Head of the Office to take quick decision.
- xvi. Noting should be replaced by check list in case of repetitive subjects like passing of works estimates, according tree felling permission or transit permits, disposal of offence cases etc. Head of the Office may determine the contents of the checklist. So also, check lists should be developed and used for important case like forest land leases, tenders, auctions etc.

35. Order by the Decision Taking Officer on the office note

Decision Taking Officer does not automatically mean or imply that it is the Head of the Office always. Officers working at other levels in an office can decide and dispose subjects for which they have been empowered specifically by:

- (a) Any legislation,
- (b) State Government through a special or general order, and
- (c) Head of the Office with regard to routine office matters.

Any officer who is authorised to decide and disposal an issue or a subject matter is the Decision Taking Officer. It could be head of an office or the TA/DCO/Office Manager. Decision Taking Officers are responsible for the decision. The following principles shall be observed by them:

- i. He/she must quickly glance through the PUC, then the relevant noting on the file starting from that of Dealing Hand, go through the Act/Rules/Regulations/ Codes/ Guidelines/Circulars etc., which are referenced to by the Supervisor, take note of the suggestions given by TC/DCO and take a conscious decision on the subject matter. He/she is responsible for thorough personal scrutiny of relevant material before passing orders on the note sheet. If he/she has any doubts; has any further questions; or wants additional information, it should be noted on the file. Once the information sought is furnished, a decision on the PUC must be taken within 3 days. No file can be kept pending at his/her level beyond this period.
- ii. Raising relevant side-issue(s) (e.g. how other officers are dealing with such issues) is not prohibited on a noting. Since it can hold up the PUC for long or can potentially divert the attention from main issue altogether, such issues if raised by the Decision

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Taking Officer will be taken to a separate file and dealt separately. Main file can't be held up for this reason.

- iii. Decision Taking Officer is not always bound by the advice given by his/her subordinates. He/she is also free to elect any other course of action other than the recommended one for reasons to be stated in writing on the file. Decision taken should not be at variance with the Acts, Rules and Regulations. If they are at variance, the implications may be recorded on the note sheet and file resubmitted by the TA/ DCO/Supervisor/ Dealing Hand. If the Decision Taking Officer persists with his/her decision, the same shall be implemented at his/her risk.
- iv. Decision Taking Officer shall, in the performance of His/her official duties, or in the exercise of powers conferred on him, act in his/her best judgment except when he is acting under instructions of an official superior. In the latter case, he/she shall obtain such instructions in writing before deciding the matter. If the officer giving the instructions is not his immediate superior but higher in the hierarchy, he/she shall bring such instructions to the notice of his immediate superior and await further instructions.
- v. Decision Taking Officer should pass clear orders at the end of the note sheet and not simply initial and return the file. If he/she does so, it will be deemed that he/she is in agreement with the contents of the noting and the proposed course of action. If they agree only with some points or wish to accord sanction only in part, they should expressly mention those items. Orders issued should be crisp and not prone for misinterpretation.
- vi. Whenever an administrative or a financial decision is taken, authority delegated to him/her by the government must be quoted invariably in the orders. If orders are required to be passed in the name of Governor of Karnataka (e.g. appointments, contracts), it should be mentioned in the note sheet by the Officer or by the Office Manager.
- vii. Once the order is signed, the Decision Taking Officer is responsible for the final decision. If it is incorrect or wrong, he/she will be primarily responsible for the consequences. If the noting or recommendation(s) based on which the decision was taken by him/her was incorrect or wrong, subordinates will also be held responsible along with the Decision Taking Officer.
- viii. If any decision already taken by him/her or his/her predecessor on a subject matter which has already been communicated in writing is to be overturned, then the matter must be referred to the next higher authority. Only after permission is received,

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previous decisions can be overturned or a new trend can be set in an existing pattern of decision making.

- ix. Heads of Offices can initiate certain actions and proceedings on their own accord and make some decisions. It is not necessary that every decision should be in response to a communication from subordinates/superiors. In all such cases the 'Decision Making Officers' will draft a detailed note justifying the initiative, sign it and pass it on to the office. That note becomes the starting point for the file. All further processes will be built on that note.
- x. In emergencies, a subordinate officer may, after taking oral permission from the Decision Taking Officer, pass necessary orders on the noting; issue the communication and get it ratified within a three days after the competent officer returns to the headquarters.
- xi. The process of noting and the decision taking should be completed within the time limit prescribed.

36. Guidelines for drafting communications

Drafting is the process of converting the written orders/decisions/directions or oral instructions of competent authority into an official communication by the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers. Draft must faithfully and unambiguously convey the orders of the Decision Taking Officer.

A. Preparing routine drafts: Nearly 80% of official communications are routine in nature for which replies can be standardised. Hence Dealing Hands/Desk Officers should keep templates of frequently used communications ready on their computers, make necessary modifications and reuse them. Dealing Hands/Desk Officers should put up routine communication along with the initial file noting. Decision Taking Officer will approve the note as well as the draft. Desk Office will sign and issue the final communication. In other cases, TA/DCO can sign the final communication.

B. Preparing special drafts: Non-routine drafts must be closely supervised by the higher ups. Executive orders and important communications to higher officers, VIPs, State/Central Government, Advocate General etc., must be guided by the Decision Taking Officer personally. Lateral communications with District Administration, other government departments and communications on technical matters must be supervised by the TA/DCO. Communications to the subordinates as well as those on routine matters like audit, accounts etc., should be looked after by the Office Manager. If need be, rough drafts could be dictated by the officers concerned to the personal staff/Dealing Hands/Desk Officers.

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Drafts dictated by anyone including the Head of the Office shall pass through the normal official hierarchy in the office to check for factual errors if any. Office Manager will check the correctness of facts and figures quoted in the draft and will ensure conformity with the subsisting government orders. TA/DCO will check for technical inconsistencies if any. They must point out any omissions or commissions in the draft. Such edits should be taken note of by the officer competent to approve the draft finally.

C. Guidelines for drafting: The following guidelines should be observed in drafting:

- i. Draft is the communication proposed for issue. It should resemble final communication as far as possible. Short drafts can be handwritten. Long drafts should be typed in double space on both sides of the paper.
- ii. Sufficient margin should be left on all sides of the page. Draft should be in double line space with 14 size fonts. Page numbers except on the first page should be inserted at the bottom. Final communication should be in 1.15 space, printed on one side in 12 size fonts.
- iii. Name of the office of issue and contact details along with state government logo should be printed on the top of the page. In DO letters, name of the officer must also be mentioned in the heading. Heading is separated from the body of the communication by a separation line.
- iv. File index number, issue number, place and date of issue will be mentioned generally in the first line of the communication.
- v. Form of communication (e.g. Memorandum, Proceedings, Notification and so on) should be mentioned on top of the page. However, for some forms of communications such description may be mentioned after the preamble is written.
- vi. Subject matter should be mentioned immediately after salutation if any. It should be brief and succinct to give an idea of the content of the communication. Subject line need not stay the same all through. It can be changed as per the need.
- vii. Previous correspondence on the subject must always be cited at the reference. Citing the last communication is good enough. It is not necessary to list every reference from the past.
- viii. Only classified communications, Demi-Official letters, Secret and confidential communication should be addressed by name. Rest should be addressed by designation.
- ix. Mailing address will be written above the subject in case of letters. In all other communications mailing address will be given at the bottom of the draft. Mobile number and email ID of the addressee also should be furnished in the mailing address.

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- x. Opening paragraph should serve as a preamble. It should be a brief recap of the subject matter and set the context for what is going to come up. Where the correspondence is regular or has a personal touch (e.g. DO letter), no preamble is needed.
- xi. Lengthy tables, notes etc., should never be a part of the communication. Such items should be placed as appendix if relevant explanation is provided in the communication. If it is a standalone document relevant to the subject matter, it should be attached as annexure. Details of appendices/annexures (DA) should be mentioned at the end of the communication.
- xii. Kannada should be the medium of communication to the public within the state and Group D and D subordinates. Communications to Government of India, Courts, Advocate General etc., could be in English.
- xiii. If there are more subjects or issues in the body of the communication, each one should be covered in a separate paragraph. Main paragraphs should be numbered as 1, 2, 3...; sub-paragraphs a, b, c...; and further sub-divisions as i, ii, iii.... and so on.
- xiv. Communication style: The following points must be kept in mind:
 - (a) Draft should be written ordinarily in third person.
 - (b) Body of the draft should be clear, concise and incapable of misconstruction.
 - (c) Sentences should be short, simple and free from ambiguity. Each sentence should not exceed one or two lines.
 - (d) Brevity and clarity of expression should mark the body of the draft. Main communication should not be longer than two pages.
 - (e) Simple, polite and official language should be used. Colloquial words, similes, metaphors, hyperboles and unnecessary verbiage should be avoided.
 - (f) Refusal of requests should be communicated clearly and politely.
 - (g) If the communication includes instructions, they should be arranged in a logical order.
 - (h) If a reply or response is to be expected, a probable date should be indicated in the issue.
 - (i) Use of abbreviations, italics, bold, underlining, highlighting etc., is not permitted.
 - (j) There should be no repetition of any kind in the body of the communication.
 - (k) Where sum of money is mentioned, it should be in both figures and words.

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- xv. Lengthy or complex communications should be summarised briefly at the end.
- xvi. If the signatory is not the Head of the Office, name, designation, contact number (mobile or landline) and e-mail ID should be mentioned just below the space for signature.
- xvii. If the draft communication is edited in too many places which may affect the legibility, a revised draft should be prepared and placed on the file before submitting to the next higher officer. In such cases, drafts should be numbered as Draft I, II, III and so on. Only the final draft approved by the competent officer is to be retained on the file when fair copy of the communication is submitted for signature.
- xviii. Location of the draft on the computer and the name of the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer must be appended as a foot note on the last page of the communication.

D. Time limit for draft submission, approval and issue: Following time limits apply for disposal:

- i. In respect of routine cases being handled by Desk Officers, approval of the file noting by a competent officer is sufficient. Drafting work, signing final communication and issue shall be completed by him/her within three days of the approval of office note.
- ii. In respect of routine cases being dealt by a Dealing Hands and non-routine cases being dealt either by the Dealing Hands or the Desk Officers, draft reply should be put up on the file in accordance with the above guidelines within three working days after the noting on the file has been approved. Only one working day is allowed in urgent, immediate or time constrained cases (e.g. court cases, Assembly questions).
- iii. The draft should reach the Decision Taking Officer through proper channel within the next two days. He/she will approve the draft with such changes as deemed necessary within a day or two. The file will then be returned to the Dealing Hand /Desk Officer for making fair copies of the final communication and issue.
- iv. Approved draft communication should be issued within two days by the competent officer.
- v. On an average final communication should be issued within 7 days after the file noting has been approved in non-routine cases. Overall time limit of disposal of correspondence shall be as specified in section 38.

37. Guidelines for issuing final communication

- i. Final communication for issue should be printed neatly on both sides of the paper using one line space. It should be free from any typos and grammatical errors. Page margins should be as specified in section 40. All pages should be numbered at the bottom.

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- ii. DO letters should be printed on good quality (100 gsm or above) bond paper in colour. Other communications should be printed in black and white on regular (80 gsm) paper.
- iii. Each addressee should be able to get an original copy of the communication. Hence print as many original copies as there are addressees plus one additional office copy for the file.
- iv. Urgency grading (immediate, urgent, important, priority, express mail) should be rubber stamped on top of first page of communication.
- v. Appendix/annexure if any should be stapled to the each copy of the communication.
- vi. Dealing Hand and other subordinates must affix their initials on the office (last) copy just below the designation of the officer who is expected to sign the communication.
- vii. Place all the fair copies on the file, flag the pages for signature, make necessary entries on the note sheet and submit the file to the officer for signature through proper channel. Whenever any file is submitted to higher authorities entries must be made in the File Movement Register. Format of the File Movement Register shall be as follows:

File Movement Register					
Office of _____					
Date	File number	Subject	Put up for what purpose	Initials of the Supervisor	Date of return of the file

- viii. Supervisor will check the correctness and completeness of the fair copies including date of communication; attachments, references etc., and submit it to the higher authorities on special file boards with the name tag 'for signature'. Personal staff of officers should take particular care of such papers and ensure their speedy disposal on priority.
- ix. Officers are expected to read the communication carefully, understand the import and sign the communication if it is appropriate and complete in all respects. File should be cleared on the same day on which it was submitted or on the next working day.
- x. Dated signature should be affixed at the designated places in the main communication as well as the appendix. All other pages should be initialled at the bottom. Once signed by the officer, nothing including the date shall be added by anybody later on.
- xi. Statutory orders shall be signed only by the officer authorised to exercise those powers/ authority. Other officers shall not sign such papers.
- xii. If the communication is addressed to higher officers, GoK, other states, Gol or external

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agencies like AG, Courts, elected representatives like MLA/MP etc., only the Head of the Office should sign the papers personally.

- xiii. After fair copies are signed, the file will be returned to the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer by the personal staff. The Dealing Hand/Desk Officer will have the full communication photo copied for sending to the officers to whom it has been marked.
- xiv. All copies will be sent for despatch on the same or the next day. Acknowledgement will be obtained from the Despatch Assistant on the office copy of the communication. The Dealing Hand/Desk Officer will email a scanned copy of the same to the addressee if the matter is urgent or important. An SMS alert should also be sent him/her.
- xv. Issuing final communication should not take more than three days. The Dealing Hand will list the matter in the Reminder Diary if a response is expected to the communication just issued. Then he/she store the file appropriately. Reminder Diary must be regularly posted up, watched and followed up. Replies due on receipts or issues, reports and returns to be submitted, files to be put up on specific dates, personal engagements such as meetings to attend, appointments given to others etc., shall be listed date-wise by each staff member and officer in the Reminder Diary. If action on an item remains incomplete the subject should be listed for another date in the Reminder Diary. Entries must continue till each subject taken up is brought to a logical end. Reminder diary is mandatory for every staff and officer in the department. Hence all staff and officers must be provided with suitable diaries every year. Format of the Reminder Diary shall be as under:

Reminder Diary		
(Annual Diary to be used and reminders to be noted thereon)		
Subject	File no	Action to be taken

38. Time limit for disposal of correspondence

The following time limits should be adhered to by different offices in the disposal of correspondence:

- i. Where time limit is specified in any Act/Rule/Regulation/court or tribunal/any another authority, it shall be adhered to without fail.
- ii. Scheduled returns should reach the authorities as per the calendar fixed and circulated. Advance action should be initiated if it involves gathering data from subordinate offices.
- iii. Replies furnished should be complete in all respects and should meet the requirements of the receiver. Otherwise, it will be deemed as non-reply.

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iv. Receipts should be responded within the following overall time limits:

Type of urgency grading	Response time (in days)		
	Ranges and Sub-Division Offices	Divisions, Zonal and Circle Offices	Head Office
Immediate	1	2	3
Urgent	3	3	4
Priority	5	5	7
Important	7	7	10
All others	10	10	10

- v. The time limits prescribed above are without prejudice to cases where longer time lines may apply (e.g. conducting departmental enquiries, forest settlement, field data collection, FOC inquiries). In such cases, the work shall be completed as expeditiously as possible but within the overall time frame fixed by the competent authority for each one of them.
- vi. If delay is anticipated in responding to any receipt, it should be informed to the other party as soon as possible and an interim reply to that effect should be sent. Email, SMS and other communication tools must be employed liberally to speed up the file processing work.
- vii. Collectively the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer and the Office Manager along with the ministerial officers at the intermediate levels are responsible for prompt and timely disposal of all matters. Consequences for failing to respond or comply with the requirements within the prescribed time limits will rest on them collectively.

Soon after a proper response has been sent details should be updated in the General or Special Desk Diary maintained by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer. Docketing abstract should also be updated by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer. Dealing Hand/Desk Officer should make a note of further action due in the 'Reminder Diary' date-wise. Officer Manager should update the details of responses sent in the daily statement of receipts.

39. Aids to check delays in disposal

Disposal of correspondence may get delayed for any number of reasons. All office functionaries shall make sincere efforts to avoid delays because it has costs and consequences. Files and papers must be disposed proactively by adopting the following methods:

- A. Keep the general aids for quick disposal handy:** Ministerial staff and officers must take the lead in quick disposal. They must be thorough with the rules, regulations and procedures applicable. The following books, documents and records must be maintained and used by each Dealing Hand/Desk Officers:

Notes: _____

- i. One copy of the relevant Acts, Rules, Manuals, Codes, Handbooks etc.
- ii. Guard File containing the GOs, Notifications, Circulars and departmental guidelines arranged in chronological order.
- iii. Register of Files, File Movement Register and Call Book
- iv. Check lists for processing routine subjects and templates of routine correspondence, and
- v. Reminder Diary and Files Movement Register.

B. Maintaining watch list of periodical returns/reports and compiling data on MIS:

Head Office will prepare a schedule of periodical returns and reports to be compiled periodically by different officers and circulate the list to all subordinate offices in the month of April every year. Format for the watch list shall be as follows:

Karnataka Forest Department							
Watch list of Periodical Reports and Returns for the year -----							
Sl no	Name of the Periodical	Last date for submission by RFO	Last date for submission by DCF/CF	Last date for submission by CCF	Last date for submission to State Govt	Actual date of submission	Remarks
Monthly returns							
Quarterly returns							
Half yearly returns							
Annual returns							

RFOs, Ministerial Heads and TA/DCO should keep a copy of this watch list on their table and see that the information for the periodical report/return is furnished in time. The above schedule as well as the formats for each return should be posted on the departmental web site. A comprehensive MIS should be used for generating data/information. The prescribed returns need not be physically compiled at each level. Data input by Range Offices should be sufficient for automatic generation the information at any time and at any level. Time and human resources should not be wasted on manual compilation of returns. The list of periodical reports/returns should be reviewed once

Notes: _____

in three years. Unnecessary reports should be eliminated and retained ones shall be rationalised. Higher Officers should not prescribe additional reports or returns without verifying whether the required information can be assembled from the existing ones. Only if it is absolutely essential a new periodical report/return should be prescribed.

C. Preparing an Annual Calendar of Office Works and executing them: Like the schedule of reports/returns, a calendar of common office works to be attended during each year should be prepared by the Head Office and circulated to all offices to ensure that all important aspects of office management are identified and attended to in an organised way across the department. It shall be in the following format:

Karnataka Forest Department									
Calendar of common office works for the year -----									
Sl no	Name of office work	Who should do the work	Where to do the work	Starting date	Closing Date	Date for submission of report	Who will review the work	Expected outcome	Remarks

Works should be distributed fairly evenly across all the months. Knowing the schedule in advance helps the subordinates to prepare themselves for the planned work. Records can be kept ready. While preparing this calendar, due notice should be taken of the duties and responsibilities prescribed in various Acts, Rules, Regulations, Manuals, Codes, Hand books, Projects, Plans etc. It should include important items office inspections; updating of forest land records; clearing forest offence, sanction of APOs/estimates; closing files and recording of office records; and so on. Necessary trainings/workshops should be organised beforehand for the newly inducted office staff to handle the list of identified subjects effectively.

D. Monthly review of pending receipts and files: On the last day of every month, RFOs and Sub-Divisional Officers should review the pending receipts based on the entries in the Receipts Register and files disposed based on the File Movement Register and take follow up action on the pendency if any. In Divisional, Zonal and Circle Offices, Ministerial Head of the office should review the same and submit a report to the Head of the Office through the TA on the first of next month. This should be done through a meeting of the office staff. Similarly in the Head Office, Administrative Officers and Chief Administrative Officers should do this and submit reports to the Head of the Office. Reports to the Head of the Office should be in the following format:

Notes: _____

Monthly Review of Action Taken on the Receipts

Name of the office: _____

Month: _____

Sl no	Particulars	Desk numbers and names of dealing hands						Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6...		
Stock									
1	No of receipts brought forward from last month								
2	No of fresh receipts of the current month								
3	Total								
Disposal									
4	No of just for information receipts which have been filed								
5	No of cases taken to files for further processing								
6	Total								
Pending									
7	No of receipts pending for further action								
	Total								

Monthly Review of File Disposal

Name of the office: _____

Month: _____

Sl no	Particulars	Desk numbers and names of dealing hands						Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6...		
Stock									
1	No of files pending at the end of last month								
2	No of fresh files opened during the current month								
3	Total								
Disposal									
4	No of files on which action is just completed								
5	No of files closed, recorded and sent to record room								
6	Total								

Notes: _____

Files under process									
7	No of current files processed during the month								
Pending files									
8	No of cases pending with subordinate offices/staff								
9	No of cases pending with higher officers								
10	No of cases pending with other government departments								
11	No of cases pending with the Courts/Tribunals etc								
12	No of cases pending with the State Government								
15	No of cases pending with the general public/applicants								
16	No of cases pending elsewhere with others								
17	No of await cases listed in the Call Book of Files								
18	Total								

Review of pending receipts and files is a mandatory task for the ministerial staff and supervisory officers. Receipts which are pending for more than a month without being taken to files and files which are pending for more than three months must be gone into details to find the reasons and further action must be taken to expedite their processing. Along with this, they must also check and see if the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer is maintaining, updating and using the Reminder Diary regularly or not. Action must be taken to see that it is maintained and used. Heads of Offices must also peruse the abstracts and take further action on files pending for long time.

E. Table inspection: A table inspection of each Dealing Hand/Desk Officer must be taken up within three days after the close of the month to ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of disposal and the pendency. In Range and Sub-divisional Offices, table inspection shall be conducted by the Head of the Office. In other offices, Office Manager/TA/DCO will do the table inspections and report the outcome to Head of the Office. This occasion will also be used to judge whether:

- i. Dealing Hand has reasonable working knowledge about the subjects,
- ii. Files and records are organised and stored neatly,
- iii. Required registers are being maintained.
- iv. Prescribed procedures are being followed correctly,
- v. Disposals are really effective or superficial, and

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vi. Closed files are being sent to record room from time to time.

Necessary guidance and advice should be provided to the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer. If he/she fails to come up to the expectation, and if repeated table inspections are warranted, the matter should be reported to the Head of the Office. If necessary the persons should be deputed for training. If that also does not produce the desired effect, he/she may be given lighter responsibilities. If that is also not done properly, action must be taken to discharge him/her from the government service in accordance with the service rules.

F. Issuing or receiving of reminders: If any correspondence of an office which is not responded to in time, a reminder should be issued within three days after the response is due. Thereafter reminders shall be issued at weekly intervals. If no response is received after the second reminder, a DO letter shall be addressed to the officer concerned. If there is no response even to the DO letter, the matter should be pursued by the TA or Head of the Office on telephone with the officer concerned. If there is no response even to the phone calls of the Head of the Office may depute a staff member from his office, get the response required and recover the cost from the subordinate officer who failed to respond. With respect to the reminders received, the Head of the Office should watch for them while looking at the tappal. The concerned Dealing Hand/Desk Officer should be taken to task if reminders are found in the tappal.

G. Adopting Desk officer system: Desk Officer System is a decentralised way of working. It should be adopted invariably in the Head Office and to the extent possible in Zonal and Circle Offices. It elevates the status of the Dealing Hand to that of a knowledge worker; shortens the process of drafting and issuing of communications, and devolves some degree of autonomy to the lower level functionaries for speedy disposal. He/she is authorised to conduct the interim correspondence if the information required is incomplete. However, he/she is not entitled to take any decision or give sanction/approval. Decision making power continues to vest with the officer to whom the authority is devolved. Desk Officer will only process the papers internally and inform the decisions of competent authority. He/she is the custodian of files and records being handled at the desk and is required to maintain the files and records like any other Dealing Hand. Paper work including typing is to be accomplished by him/her without seeking any assistance except where long text or statements are to be prepared as attachments to the outward mails. Assistance will be provided in routine chores like photocopying, physically carrying the files from desk to desk, dusting the files and papers etc. Desk Officer System thus integrates many functions at one place which helps in speedy disposal. It enhances the efficiency and responsibility. It calls for competence and willingness. Group B Officers in the grade of Gazetted Manager or Administrative Assistant can be designated as

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Desk Officers. If the work assigned is technical in nature, Range Forest Officer can be appointed as Desk Officers. Desk Officers work will be supervised by the Office Manager and the TA/DCO. For more details see para 50 (G).

H. Adopt 'Single File System': This is particularly relevant to the Head Office. Many subjects require consultation or action between different constituent offices. Simple matters are sorted out by exchanging unofficial notes. More complicated ones are sorted out through constitution of committees, conducting meetings and drawing the proceedings. In the existing system, files tend to be opened in each office as a result of which there is a proliferation of work. This should be avoided. There shall be only one file on any given subject matter in Head Office. This single file shall be developed in the office to which the main subject relates. The file is then circulated from one office to another through the File Movement Register. While marking to another officer, the officer marking it should clearly mention what is expected from the next office in his/her file noting. Officers to whom the file has been marked should record their opinion or observation on the file itself. Should he/she require the opinion of his official subordinates or if the internal consultations within that office are sensitive for disclosure, then a sub-file should be developed, final orders passed in the sub-file file, a copy of that order docketed in the main file and returned to the office of origin. There shall be no other file on the same subject in any office. There shall be only one file and the subject should be comprehensively dealt on that file only.

I. Redistribution of files/work: Human beings are endowed with differential capabilities. Even under similar circumstances, learning and the ability to achieve the targets could go off the mark widely. While every attempt should be made to build the capabilities and to enable the personnel to excel in their respective areas of work, if things don't work as planned or envisaged, it is inevitable to redistribute the work among those who are more capable because many activities are mandatory. As a matter of practice, subjects can be grouped together and can be handled easily should be assigned to each Dealing Hand/ Desk Officer. How many subjects and files can be assigned to one Dealing Hand depends on a number of factors such as the abilities of the person, volume of work involved in each file/case, procedures prescribed for different subjects, guidance, collateral support available and so on. Volume of work is a dynamic factor and keeps changing from time to time. The Office Manager/TA/DCO must keep a constant watch on performance and redistribute the work among different Dealing Hands with the prior permission of the Head of the Office once in a year. Following files should be redistributed:

- i. Files which are too complicated for the present Dealing Hand and hence not attended for quite some time,

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- ii. Files where action from a particular Dealing Hand is completed but action is due from another Dealing Hand/section,
- iii. File newly created from an existing file for handling a part of the subject matter which belongs to a different category,
- iv. Files which are required to be transferred to another Dealing Hand due to redistribution of work within the office, and
- v. Files not pertinent to the Dealing Hand but wrongly held by him/her.

Serial numbers of files closed or transferred should be rounded off in red ink under the dated initials of the Office Manager and entered afresh in the File Register elsewhere.

J. Migrate to Less Paper Office and then to e-Office: Being small offices, Range and Sub-Divisional Offices can manage with the manual system of office management. Divisional, Zonal and Circle Offices may require some amount of automation. Head office certainly requires computerisation of office work because of the large volume of receipts, files and issues. A simple system of tracking the receipts till they are docketed (LMS) on the file and tracking files (FMS) thereafter is already available in the form of Less Paper Office (LPO). It is being practiced partially in the Head Office. However, as the use of ICT advances in public offices, it may become necessary for each public office irrespective of its size to develop a system where every communication received is registered, acknowledged, converted into a soft copy if it not so, given a token number and processed further. Transparency requirement may require that public and other interested persons should be enabled to track the action being taken based on the token number. This requirement may become common to all offices. An e-Office application software has been designed and put into practice at higher levels of government. In this system, any communication is first converted into a soft copy and all further processing is done at all the levels only on-line till the very end of the subject matter. After completing the action, if necessary a copy of the full file is printed by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer and archived in the record room. There is no physical movement of papers or files except for this. Even the LPO software allows this to certain extend. It is desirable that Karnataka Forest Department also shifts to such a system which in any case is inevitable in the years to come. A firm foundation should be laid for this through training.

K. Keeping the staff and officers updated: Modern era is characterised by rapid changes to the procedures and practices mainly due to the ICT as well as the high public demand for transparency and efficient service delivery. New Acts, Rules and Regulations come into being frequently. It is necessary to keep the staff updated on these aspects. It should be done through frequent interaction among the office staff, induction training, pre-promotion training, refresher training, workshops, seminars etc., whenever required.

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At least one workshop/seminar must be organised through at the Circle level for the office staff where the developments in the last one year and their implications should be explained to them. Executive staff posted to office duty must be given 7 days special training on office procedure. Learning should not be left entirely to the interest of individuals. There should be a method of systematically assessing the capabilities of staff and updating their skills.

40. Treatment of confidential and secret files

- A. Confidential files:** Head of the Office may decide which files are confidential and give them to the custody to Office Manager/TA/DCO or any other person in the office in whom he/she has full faith and confidence. Confidential files will bear a different file index number starting with X. Each file will be serially numbered (e.g. X1, X2, X3 ...) followed by the year. Confidential papers must be kept always under lock and key. They should be carried personally and discussed with the Decision Taking Officer and not handled like other routine correspondence. Confidential communications are sent by name. Replies to such communications shall be sent directly in the name of the receiving officer unless it has been asked to be submitted through proper channel.
- B. Secret files:** Secret files will bear the code starting with Z (e.g. Z1, Z2, Z3 ...) etc. Secret files and papers should remain in the personal custody of the Head of the Office and be dealt with by him/her personally. If relevant for future, they should be personally handed over to the new incumbent at the time of transfer. As far as possible typing, proof reading, printing, photocopying etc., should be done directly by the officer concerned in his/her chamber. Persons with proven credentials alone may be used as Assistants. All drafts and rough notes and other routine papers of secret papers and files must invariably be destroyed as soon as the fair copies are ready. If secret papers are required to be produced in bulk (e.g. question papers), it should be done in a high security press of repute which is being employed by other state or central government departments for similar purposes. Number of copies made should be carefully recorded, each copy machine numbered serially and identified by number in the distribution or despatch list. Spare copies should be strictly limited and fully accounted for. Head of the Office should review the procedures and ensure that there is absolutely no leakage anywhere. Secret papers shall never be sent by post. They should be security sealed by placing at least two layers of tamper proof protective covers, embossed with the monogram of the Head of the Office, put inside a wooden or a metal box, locked and despatched under proper escort. Keys to the lock should be couriered or sent separately. Where necessary, opening and closing of secret papers could be video graphed and checked for any tampering/leakage. The officer handling the secret papers shall be responsible for any leakage.

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The information contained in confidential/secret files and papers shall not be used in any manner by anyone except as provided. Unauthorised use is punishable. Officers and staff who handle the confidential/secret files must treat them with great personal care. No scope should be given for leakage of the information at any stage till the process is completed in all respects. Separate 'Confidential Cases Register' and 'Secret Papers Register' should be maintained by the officers handling such papers. Sufficient number of pages should be devoted for recording the proceedings on each file/case till its final disposal. Once the process is completed, confidential/secret files may be sent to record room after taking due care to seal the file. If they have no archival value, the files should be shredded multiple times, destroyed and burnt in the presence of the officer.

41. Matters concomitant to handling of files

A. General lay out and usage of space on official communications: A written communication emanating from any office should observe the following margins and noting norms:

- i. Top margin should be about 5 cm. It should contain the postal address of the issuing office, contact phone numbers and email ID. For DO letters and other important correspondence, pre-printed or a template of letter head carrying the name of the office should be used. The State Government Emblem shall be printed at the top of the page in the mid width. At least 1 cm of free space should be available on the top. Page numbers at the time of docketing the receipts should be marked in blue or black ink on the top right hand corner.
- ii. Left margin should be 3 cm. This space should be used for embossing the office seals of receiving office, marking receipt numbers, affixing initials by the staff and officers handling the receipt and issuing short instructions at the receipt stage. Office seals etc., should commence from the top of the left margin and proceed downwards. Nothing should be added in the middle. Spill over notes if any can continue on the page bottom.
- iii. Right margin should be 2 cm. Nothing should be mentioned in this space. However, if any citation/referencing to rules, regulations, previous letter etc., are to be done this space can be used. A sharp vertical line may be drawn at the relevant place and note made next to that.
- iv. Bottom margin should be 2 cm. This space should be used to mark the page number of the communication at the time of receipt. At the time of recording the file, continuous page numbers of the file should be recorded at the right bottom corner of the page in red ink.

The above conventions must be adhered to ensure uniformity across the department.

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B. Opening and handling of Part Files: A Part File may be opened when the main file is not likely to be available for some time and it becomes necessary to process a fresh receipt or a note without waiting for its return, or when the main file has become rather bulky in which case only the essential papers which are required for the disposal of a point should be submitted with a separate note sheet and not the whole file. A Part File can be developed in the office of origin of the original file and not by any other office. It will normally consist of:

- i. Copies of 'Paper Under Consideration' and other essential papers on the 'Correspondence part of the main file; and
- ii. Copies of office notes recorded on the 'Paper Under Consideration' from the note sheet part.

Part file should bear the same name as the original file with an extension in parenthesis (Part file – I, II, III and so on). Details about the original file will be noted in the note sheet of the part file as a preamble. After the Part File is processed and suitable orders passed, copy of the order so passed should be placed in the original file also and a note made of it in the note sheet file. After action is completed, Part Files should be placed below the original file and together they should be deposited in the record room. For example, if Vigilance Wing finds some irregularities in works and recommends disciplinary action against some officers/staff, Personnel/Establishment related Office will create a part file, initiate action against the delinquent, complete the process of departmental enquiry, finalize the proceedings, issue necessary orders and return the part file to Vigilance Wing. In the meanwhile, the Vigilance Wing is expected have completed its probe, fix the problem and get suitable orders issued from competent authority to prevent recurrence of the problem. Together they mark the completion of action. Thereafter Part File will be forwarded to the section dealing with the main file and together they will be deposited in the record room.

C. Linking of files: When two or more files are linked by a common subject matter, theme, person or issue etc., they may be linked if action is due on any one of them. A slip bearing the word 'please see the linked file' should be pinned to the cover of the topmost file. When files are to be linked, they will be placed on a common file board and the strings tied around to make it as one bundle. After decision is taken, copies of orders will be placed in both the files and suitable entries are made in the note sheets. Once action is over, the files will be delinked and returned to the Desks.

D. Opening of disjointed files prohibited: Temptation to open files for each and every receipt as well as to treat each receipt as a separate file independent of the previous communications on the same subject must not be permitted. If allowed, it leads to chaos

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in the communications and gives a false impression that too many files are being handled by the Dealing Hands. It will also lead to taking ad hoc decisions which is not desirable.

- E. Taking files and work home:** As far as possible, office work should be attended to in the office. However, case files which require in depth study, application of mind and writing of long orders may be taken home/sent home in tappal boxes if the Decision Taking Officer so wishes, retained for 2 or 3 days at the most, necessary orders drafted and files returned to office. Ministerial Head of the office will maintain a record of files sent to the officers' home and their return. Except Decision Taking Officers, others are barred from taking the office files or work to home.
- F. Sending urgent or important tappal to camps:** Officers on tour should be updated telephonically by the Office Manager or TA/DCO about urgent and important tappal. Relevant files and papers may be sent to the halting station through a special messenger if the tour is within the official jurisdiction. Such files/papers shall be disposed on the same day by the officers and returned to the office on the next day.
- G. Taking out copies of papers from files:** If at any time, it is found necessary to take copies of a whole file or some pages thereof, it should be done under the specific permission of the Office Manager/TA/DCO. Original papers from current or recorded files shall never be issued. Only certified photocopies can be issued under acknowledgement.
- H. Storing files, documents, stores and stocks:** Every Dealing Hand/Desk Officer is responsible for the safe custody of files, registers, other records and stocks if any given to his/her charge. They must always keep the files, registers and other valuables under lock and key. Official documents must be classified and stored. Each shelf should be labelled properly so that the required files can be easily located and retrieved even in his/her absence. When the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer proceeds on leave, keys should be handed over to the Office Manager. The Office Manager may take out required files/papers/records personally. As soon as the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer returns to duty, the keys shall be handed over. Formal handing over and taking over of files is necessary. Dealing Hand/Desk Officer must make sure that the papers/files required during his/her absence is easily available to the Office Manager.
- I. Responsibility for the files at the time of taking over/making over of charge:** Whenever any employee or officer is proceeding on long leave or is transferred out from his/her current posting, he/she shall handover the charge of each file after updating the correspondence and properly briefing the incoming person. At this time, files which are not required any more should be closed and with the approval of the Office Manager, should be sent to the record room. Handing over of files should be completed in three days at the most. A charge note containing the details of records/files handed over/taken

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over, list of long pending files, files/work to be attended on priority etc., should be listed in the report. A copy should be given to Office Manager.

J. Security of official information and documents: No officer or employee of the department shall communicate directly or indirectly any official document or any part thereof or information which has come into his possession in the course of his official duties, or has been prepared, collected or compiled by him to any other person, Press of Electronic Media unless specifically authorised by the RTI Act and Rules or the departmental rules.

K. Maintenance of Call Book: Files on which no action is required to be taken for the next 3 months or more should be may be stored separately by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer after making a suitable entry in the Reminder Diary. However, if storage space is a constraint, such files could be deposited with the Record Room Assistant with the permission of the Office Manager. Details of such files must be entered in the Call Book using the following format:

Call book										
Office of _____										
Sl no	File no	Subject matter	Reason for depositing	Likely date of revival	Initials of Dealing Hand	Initials of Office Manager	Initials of the Record Room Assistant	Date of recall	Initials of the Record room Assistant	Initials of Dealing Hand

Each Dealing Hand/Desk Officer will have his/her own call book where entries will be made. Whenever required the files will be recalled and processed.

42. Maintaining permanent dossiers and registers

Being a land based organisation, Karnataka Forest Department is required to maintain certain records for all times. E.g. Gazette Notifications of forest lands, original survey maps, forest lease agreements, rights recognised under the Forest Rights Act, Judgements of higher courts on land matters, inventory of flora and fauna, records of permanent preservation plots, and so on. Such records should be maintained in the form of permanent dossiers and preserved very carefully in the record room. Dossier is a complete set of original records about an event or a subject matter.

A dossier consists of a hardbound box file with metal rings to hold the documents. This file is again enclosed in another hard plastic or PVC case to make the document pest and damage proof. First each dossier is to be built carefully with original records. If original records are not available, copies certified by the competent authorities can also be taken to these dossiers. Documents shall be arranged in chronological order, given page numbers, each sheet of the

Notes: _____

document laminated properly, punched correctly and placed on the correspondence portion of a lever file. An index of the papers so preserved shall be maintained on the note portion of the file. Routine correspondence shall not be filed in these dossiers. However, it may contain copies of the orders and any correspondence that may have a critical bearing on the other orders or documents contained in the dossier.

Each and every dossier must be carefully built, given a proper title and a serial number. Only the serial number will be marked on the case (but not the title) with a permanent marker. All the dossiers prepared shall be entered in a permanent register maintained by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer. These dossiers will be used very sparingly. Secondly, contents of the dossier shall not be publicly disclosed. Hence each dossier must be enclosed in a case and then preserved in the record room under the joint custody of the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer and the Record Room Assistant in a closed metal file rack having double lock system. The Record Room Assistant need not go through the contents of the dossier. He/she should be satisfied with the dossier number. Whenever required for reference purposes, any dossiers can be taken out after recording the movement in the Issue Register of record room. Soon after the purpose is over, the dossier must be replaced in its original place in the record room. Minimally there should be one dossier for each notified forest, protected area and forest lease. Other dossiers as prescribe in the Karnataka Forest Code, Manual, and Rules and so on and should also be developed, preserved and used sparingly. Whenever any new order is passed on a subject contained in the dossier, a copy of original order must find a place in the dossier. These dossiers have high archival value and therefore should be entrusted to reliable employee(s).

43. Office inspections

Office inspections are not investigations. They are meant to find out the state of affairs and ensure effective functioning of the office. It is meant for introspection and immediate correction. Only in exceptional cases it can be used as a tool for initiating punitive action. Every Head of the Office is responsible for organising three types of office inspections namely:

- A. Monthly table inspection by the Ministerial Head/TA/DCO:** Table inspection has been dealt in para 39 (d) above. Essentially it is a tool to keep a watch over delays. Head of the office should make sure that this is being done and the findings reach his/her table at the end of first week every month. Findings should be reviewed and laggards if any should be suitably advised.
- B. Annual Inspection the Head of the Office:** He/she must take up an annual inspection of his own office in the first fortnight of April every year. It must be conducted in accordance with the proforma for office inspections prescribed by the Head Office. It should be completed before the annual inspections are launched by the next higher officer within

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the department or the Accountant General of Karnataka. Compliance with procedures and updating of records is as important as the field work. Hence Controlling Officer must spare at least half a day for office inspections whenever they come on tour/inspections to understand the way programs are understood, planned, implemented and records are maintained by the subordinate officers.

C. Annual inspection of subordinate offices: Every Controlling Officer is responsible for undertaking annual inspection of all his/her immediate subordinate offices (Level I) and one randomly selected lower office (Level II). Selection of Level II offices should be done randomly. An office inspected already need not be inspected till the full cycle of all Level II Offices is completed. Following is the scale of inspections to be conducted by different officers:

SI no	Name of controlling officer	Offices to be inspected	
		Level I	Level II
1	Divisional Officers	All Range Offices	All Sub-Divisional Offices
2	Circle Officers	All Divisional Offices	Any two Sub-Divisional Offices
3	Head of respective Wings in HO	Zonal Offices	Any two immediate lower Offices
4	Budget, Accounts and Audit Wing in HO	All Circle Offices	One Divisional Office per Circle

D. Annual calendar of office inspections: Since all the offices in the state have to be subjected to at least one office inspection every year, it is necessary to draw an annual calendar of inspections indicating the month, offices to be inspected and inspection team members. It should be done by the Head of the Budget, Accounts and Audit Office in the Head Office in consultation with heads of constituent offices in Head Office and Circle Officers. The calendar should be prepared in December every year and approved and circulated to all the officers in the state before March. Annual office inspections will proceed accordingly during the next financial year. Progress of office inspections will be monitored centrally. Compliance with the inspection observations will however be monitored by the respective controlling officers.

E. Proforma for inspections: List of items for inspection should be drawn from the various Acts, Rules, Codes and Regulations prescribed by the State Government. Proforma for inspection will be prepared/approved by the Head Office. It will be reviewed and revised once in five years to include recent topics. The proforma so approved alone should be used for office inspections.

F. Multiple inspection teams to be constituted at HO level: Since the numbers of subordinate offices to be inspected and monitored by the Head Office are many, the Head of Budget, Accounts and Audit Office may, with the prior permission of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF), constitute as many Office Inspection Teams as are

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required with officers and staff drawn from different constituent offices in HO. Team members should be at least of the rank of Section officers. Each team is responsible for completing the assigned work.

G. Memo reading by the Controlling Officers: After the office inspection, one month time shall be given to subordinate offices to complete pending works, irregularities and other shortcomings if any. Thereafter one/two lead members of the same Office Inspection Team will revisit the office and check the compliance. They will provide further advice and guidance to the subordinate offices to complete the remaining items if any. Within the next one month the respective Controlling Officers should undertake a memo reading in the respective offices to check and see if all the inspection observations have been complied with. If not he/she should get it done on the spot. Controlling Officers are not bound by inspection observations alone. They can go beyond and check if the office is being managed efficiently and the public purpose is being served.

H. Time limits for completing office inspections: Office inspections should be a short/brief affair. It should not hang on for years. Including compliance and memo reading, annual inspection should not take more than three months. Whenever a new office inspection is taken up, it should begin with the review of previous year’s inspection report and the outcome. Closure of the previous report should be ensured at the time of next inspection. If there are any leftover paragraphs, they should be taken to the new inspection report and the previous one must be closed fully.

I. Maintaining Inspection and Audit Minutes Book: Ministerial Head in every office will maintain and Inspection and Audit Minutes Book where the details of all office inspections and audit are recorded including follow up visits, action taken and closure. A few pages will be reserved for each office inspection/audit. Journal (chronological) entries will be made about each visit. Details should include members of the inspections team, number of notes/observations made, number complied with on the spot, number of replies sent each time, number of observations finally dropped, date of memo reading and final closure along with advice for future if any. Format of the Inspection and Audit Minutes Book shall be as follows:

Inspection and Audit Minutes Book				
Office of _____				
1. Type of inspection/audit				
2. Period of Inspection/Audit				
3. Names of Inspection/Audit Team members				
4. Total number of observations made during the inspection/audit				

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5. Number of observations dropped after reply					
6. Date of receipt of final inspection/audit report					
7. Number of retained paragraphs in Part A of the report (serious paras)					
8. Number of retained paragraphs in Part A of the report (routine paras)					
9. Follow up action taken	Date	Action taken	Paras replied to	Whether reply was accepted	Remarks
10. Date of next review by the inspection Audit team					
11. Number of paras finally dropped					
12. Number of paras retained and carried over to next inspection/audit report					

Recording of files

44. Importance of maintaining records

Forestry is a land based activity. Setting apart Reserved Forests, Protected Areas and managing them for the benefit of the society may last centuries and millennia. Forestry activities like road making, logging, planting, establishing recreational facilities etc., are long term ventures. Hence record keeping is an integral part of forest administration. Records about the land ownership, rights and privileges admitted, leases granted, forest inventory, investments made on protection and development etc., are indispensable for gleaning into the past management based on which future management has to be planned. Hence forest records should be maintained on par with that of Revenue (Land) Administration in the State. Poor or improper record maintenance will lead to numerous problems and protracted law suits. Hence is very essential to organise record rooms on scientific lines. Record room management should be given due importance at all times and shall not be treated lightly.

45. Offices of Record

Recording is the process of closing files, registers, document, maps, reports and other official records after action on all the issues under consideration have been completed and no further action is due. Closed files/registers should be deposited in the Record Room. Since Range and Sub-Divisional Offices are too small and not vested with necessary human resources, they need not maintain Record Room. Divisional Offices are the first office of Record. Range

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and Sub-Divisional Offices shall deposit their closed records with the Divisional Offices under acknowledgement. This work should be done after the office inspection is over and all outstanding paragraphs are closed. They shall maintain a permanent Register of Records deposited. Whenever required, records can be retrieved and returned to the record room as per rules but. All higher offices will also maintain their respective Record Rooms. As a rule the office in which a subject matter originated shall be the office of Original Record. They will be the source records for all future references. All Divisional and higher offices in the department and the Head Office shall maintain a properly organised Record Room.

46. Rules for recording of files

A. Procedure for recording of files

The following procedure shall be followed for recording:

- i. Sort out the files to be recorded based on the year of opening. Obtain the approval of the Office Manager. Square off the relevant file number in the Register of Files.
- ii. Remove the old file cover, paper flags, used postage covers, reminders, acknowledgements, drafts, working-sheets, additional/spare copies, stapler pins, gem clips, etc., from the file and retain only one set of copies of original records.
- iii. Add a coloured separator and pool the notes portion as well as correspondence portion of the file as one.
- iv. Process part file(s) if any on similar lines and add them to the main file at the end. A differently coloured separator sheet should be placed between main file and each one of the part file(s). If part files are bulky, each part file can be recorded separately.
- v. Give continuous numbers to all retained pages starting from the first page of the note portion till the end of the record on the bottom right hand corner in red ink.
- vi. Look through the file notings for references cited in the text. Insert the relevant page numbers where flag labels have been mentioned.
- vii. Photocopy important decisions, documents etc., which have precedence value and add them to the Standing Guard File on 'Precedence Cases'. This Guard File is to be maintained by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer. Add a summary sheet on top of each precedence case papers. Format of the summary sheet shall be as follows:

Precedence Cases							
Office of _____							
Sl no	Subject matter	Date of decision	Decision by whom	Decision in brief	File no	Page no	Record no

Notes: _____

- viii. Place the retained papers between two thick brown file covers – one at the top and one at the bottom of the papers. Stitch the papers and the file covers along the whole length on the left hand side as a book after setting the margins properly. Affix the office seal on top.
- ix. Obtain the required number of tokens from the Record Room Assistant. These are serial numbers in continuation in the Register of Records Received. They are printed on stickers in bold (letter size 2 inches). Paste one sticker on right hand top corner of the file.
- x. Note the following details on the cover page of the record:
 - a. Serial number of the record being deposited from the same office.
 - b. Revised/edited title which can describe the contents appropriately.
 - c. Volume number of the file next to the title, if applicable.
 - d. Total number of pages.
 - e. Record retention category.
 - f. Date of deposit.
 - g. Indicative year of review/weeding out and destruction.
- xi. Take the above details into the Register of Records of the Desk. This is a permanent register to be maintained by each Dealing Hand/Desk Officer. It will have an additional column for the signature of the Record Room Assistant.
- xii. Carry the files to the record room and deliver them to the Record Room Assistant under acknowledgement in the Register of Records.

B. Recording of registers, reports, dossiers etc

Registers, dossiers, published reports (e.g. Working Plans, Project Reports, Evaluation Reports) etc., which are not required by the Desk in the near future should also be sent to the record room for preservation after obtaining approval from Office Manager. Dossiers need to be cleaned up if necessary on the lines of files discussed above. There is no cleaning involved in respect of registers, printed reports etc. They have to be listed, given the token numbers, entered in the Register of Records and deposited in the record room under acknowledgement. These documents have to be stacked separately in the record room and should not be mixed up with files.

C. Recording of maps, building plans etc

Maps and plans are very valuable documents. They must be preserved very carefully. They should always be treated as permanent record unless specified otherwise. They are

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usually appended to a main order, notifications, reports etc. Seldom are they stand-alone documents. Hence they should be preserved along with connected main document. Normally they are bigger in size and prone for damage while handling. Where possible, they should be carefully removed from the main report, laminated, re-attached at the same place and sent to the record room. If the maps/plans are stand-alone type, a brief note on what these maps pertain to, year of map, who did the mapping/planning work, background context etc., should be noted on the back of the map/plan, duly authenticated and sent to the record room. Since maps/plans etc., are a part of the file, they should be treated as a part of recorded files and arranged accordingly.

D. Procedure for recording e-files and documents

Important e-files are generally converted into hard copies. Recording of hard copies will be done as per the procedure described above. If that is not the case and e-files remained as soft copies only, the following procedure shall be followed for recording them:

- i. Digital records are to be maintained similar to the hard copy files, registers etc. The Dealing Hand/Desk Officer will classify the record appropriately. It will be checked and confirmed by his/her next immediate higher authority for sending to the archive.
- ii. The ICT Centre shall provide some secure digital space in the departmental web server for archiving e-files. Access to this space is limited only to the Record Room Staff.
- iii. The e-files to be recorded will be transferred to the Record Room Assistant by any suitable means. He/she will post it on the archive, make an entry in his/her register and issue an acknowledgement to the Dealing Hand/Desk officer. It will contain the exact location of the e-file archived and some basic details about the files.
- iv. The acknowledgements will be preserved securely by the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer.

E. Action by the Record Room Assistant

There shall be a Record Room Assistant in every Office of Record. He/she should have computer training. A suitable searchable software data base shall be designed by the ICT Centre and installed in every Record room on a desk top. Record Room Assistant will receive the records from the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers, make necessary entries in the record room data base and preserve the records safely. Only the Record Room Assistant is authorised to open these racks, deposit the records according to the token numbers, deliver them on demand to the Dealing Hands/Desk Officers, recover and replace them as soon as possible.

F. Time for recording

Closed files and records can be sent to record room any time. However, files and records which may be required for office inspection/audit should be retained till the process

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is completed. Files and records not required anymore should be deposited within a month after the office inspection/audit. Files/records which have no inspection or audit value may be recorded any time.

47. Record Retention Schedule

The Right to Information Act and Rules have changed the paradigm of record retention schedule. The provisions of RTI Act and rules must always be kept in mind while classifying the records. Records to be sent to record room should be classified into four broad categories titled as A, B, C and D for the purpose of determining the period of retention according to the following criteria:

A. Class A records: It includes files/registers/records to be preserved permanently for all times. Very old documents where the papers have become fragile can be microfilmed and preserved. Alternatively, each page can be laminated carefully and preserved. Books, reports etc., could be converted into e-documents by scanning and saved them on the web server. These records shall not be destroyed under any circumstances and at any point of time. Each office needs to categorize the records independently. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of files and records here. An indicative list is furnished below which should serve as a guide:

- i. All types and categories of land records including forest lease cases.
- ii. Copies of previous Acts, Rules, Regulations, Manuals, Codes etc.
- iii. Notifications issued under various Acts and Rules.
- iv. Policy related documents.
- v. Government and departmental notifications and circulars.
- vi. Establishment matters such as creation of posts/organisational units, recruitments, seniority, promotions, retirements etc.
- vii. Important court litigations or 'causes celebres' having precedence value.
- viii. Works related Records and registers (logging, planting, infrastructure creation etc)
- ix. Annual Report and Annual Administration Reports.
 - x. Working Plans.
 - xi. State of Forest Reports.
 - xii. Cash books.
 - xiii. Plantation journals.
 - xiv. Record of yield.
 - xv. Record of sales.

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As far as possible 'A' category records of reference value should be converted into e-books within one year of deposit. Soft copies should be preserved on the departmental web portal and also with the Record Room Assistant. These records should not be issued frequently as some of them may be in dilapidated condition. Soft copies should be used as far as possible. Only when original records are required by courts, they should be taken out and returned to the record as soon as possible. They must be handled with extreme care.

B. Class B records: It includes records to be preserved up to 30 years and may be destroyed thereafter. These are records of historical importance. Following is the tentative list:

- i. Project related files, registers and documents.
- ii. Tour diaries of officers.
- iii. Departmental enquiry files.
- iv. Measurement Book, Field Note Book, Annual Plan of Operations, estimates, and completion certificates.
- v. Village Forest Committee, Eco-Development Committee documents.
- vi. Documentary films.
- vii. Evaluation Reports and any other official publications.
- viii. Important events like bamboo flowering.
- ix. Financial and statistical data.
- x. Malki files.

C. Class C records: It includes records to be preserved up to 20 years and may be destroyed thereafter. Following is the tentative list:

- i. Guard Files containing orders/circulars etc., which have been incorporated in to the latest edition of Acts/Rules/Regulations.
- ii. Vigilance matters.
- iii. Registers on various routine subjects.

D. Class D: It includes records to be preserved up to 10 years and may be destroyed thereafter. Following is the tentative list:

- i. Annual performance reports of the officers and staff
- ii. Inward/outward/local delivery registers.
- iii. RTI applications and disposals.

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- iv. Petitions and complaints against staff and officers.
- v. Proceedings of review meetings.
- vi. LA, LC and Parliament questions and answers.
- vii. Non-technical journals and magazines.

Decision of the Head of the Office shall be final on the record retention period. It is not necessary to preserve the records till the end of the prescribed period. If a record can be destroyed earlier, it can be indicated on the record itself next to the category (e.g. Record category B-25 means it is a B category record to be preserved for 25 years; D-7 means D category record to be preserved only for 7 years and so on). If nothing is mentioned, the record will be preserved for the maximum period of the record category.

48. Record Room Management

- A. Staffing the record rooms:** Record room shall be managed by trained Record Room Assistants at the Divisional, Circle and Zonal offices. Record room in HO must have a Section Officer and one Group D employee. Record Room Staff will work directly under the control of Office Manager. They will sit either in a separate enclosure within the record room if the space permits. Otherwise they will sit just outside the record room. Record room shall never be left open or remain unattended. It should be kept under lock and key whenever the record room staff is away.
- B. Providing for proper space and infrastructure:** Record rooms require leak proof, dust proof and fire safe building having sufficient space for preserving the records of all the administrative units in the office. There should be proper lighting and space for working of the record room staff. Wall mounted fire protection equipment shall be installed in all the record rooms. Records shall be classified and stored in movable Mobile Rack Compactors in accordance with the token numbers assigned to the records. These are lockable, rodent, insect and dust proof racks. They provided effective protection to the records. They have already been installed in Head Office and some Circle Offices. All Offices of Record including Divisional Offices should install them as soon as possible. They shall not be stored in any other types of shelves and in any other manner.
- C. Ownership for the records:** Files closed, recorded and consigned to the record room will be a part of the departmental archive. Managing them is the responsibility of Record Room Assistant. Office Manager will supervise these operations. In Head Office, PCCF (HoFF) will designate the Manager responsible. A recorded file can't be revived as a current file. If the necessity arises, a new file may be opened as volume II as an extension of the previous file along with important documents from the previous file.

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Once recorded, Dealing Hands/Desk Officers can only borrow them for reference or copying but shall return them quickly to the record room. Activities of the record room: It includes receiving the records for preservation as per the Record Retentions Schedule, lending and recovering of records, weeding out time-barred records, destroying them annually and maintaining the remaining records.

D. Rules for handling records in the record room: Whenever records are received for preservation, record room staff will proceed as follows:

- i. Record Room Assistants shall receive the records, check the completeness and correctness of the details provided on the cover page with what is actually found inside and issue an acknowledgement. Unless records are prepared in accordance with the prescribed procedure, they shall not be accepted in the record room.
- ii. Every record accepted will be entered in the searchable data base of record room and an acknowledgement will be issued to the depositor. A manual register will also be maintained as a standby to get over any problems with power trips or with the computers. Format of the Record Room Register shall be as follows:

Records Received Register							
Office of _____							
Date	Record room token number	Subject matter	No of pages	Record category	Year of destruction	Deposited by	Signature of the depositor

- iii. Records shall be stacked in rows in accordance with the token numbers assigned to them. They will be stacked with a slight slant to right side to keep the token number visible. Records will be arranged starting from the top left hand corner to the bottom right hand corner in each mobile rack compactor. If the rack gets full, it will move to the next rack to the right hand side and if that also gets full, then it will go the rack next behind. Sufficient number of racks must be installed in the record room right at the beginning to last for next ten years.
- iv. Office Managers can recall any record from the record room if necessary at any time for reference purpose. Any record can only be issued for a maximum of 7 days after which it shall be returned. A requisition containing the token number of the record should be sent to the record room. The record will be issued under acknowledgement after making necessary entries in the Register of Records Issued. Format of the register shall be as under:

Notes: _____

Records Issue Register							
Office of _____							
Date	Request received from	Token number of the record	Subject matter	Date of issue	Signature of the receiver	Date of return	Initials of Record Room Asst

v. At the time of return, the Record Room Assistant should check the record and ensure that there are no missing pages, text etc., and that the record is not tampered in any way. It will then be replaced in its original place.

E. Annual maintenance: Office Manager will make arrangements for prophylactic treatment of record room annually at an appropriate time. He/she should also ensure that the record room is maintained regularly and there is no damage of any sort to records.

F. Bar on record room staff dealing with public: Staff of the record room are barred from dealing with public in any manner directly. Any citizen (not being a departmental officer or functionary) may seek copies of any record under the RTI Act, 2005. The Information Officer notified under the Act will transfer the request to the Office Manager who will get the relevant record from the record room and get the relevant documents issued under proper acknowledgement. The record will then be returned to the record room for preservation.

G. Weeding out time-barred records: B, C and D category records whose retention period is over should be pulled out and destroyed annually. Record Room Assistant should take up weeding operations annually in the month of September and complete it by December. The following procedure shall be followed for weeding out and destruction:

- i. The period prescribed for destruction commences from the date of receipt of the record at the record room.
- ii. Records due for destruction will be listed each year and the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer concerned will be notified about the proposed destruction in the month of August.
- iii. Within a week of receipt of such communication, the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer must visit the record room, go through the relevant records once again and extend the life of the record if necessary. Record Retention Category can also be changed. If the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer does not turn up and if there is no communication from him/her records shall be destroyed as proposed.
- iv. Records scheduled for destruction as per the list will be pulled out from their shelves. Details of each record being taken out shall be mentioned on a thick paperboard. It should include name/subject matter of the record, date of deposit, deposited

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by whom, record of category, period of preservation, number of pages and date of destruction. It shall be given the same token number and inserted in place of the record being destroyed. This sheet is an indication that a certain record has been officially destroyed. Records taken out for destruction shall be kept in a separate place for the final inspection of Office Manager.

- v. Office Manager will inspect each file and give his/her clearance for destruction. If there is any doubt, he/she will crosscheck with the Dealing Hand/Desk Officer concerned. Records which are not to be destroyed will be sent back to the shelves. Revised retention category and the year in which to destroy will be marked afresh on such records. Records finally listed for destruction will be listed in the Register of Record destroyed. Format of the register shall be as follows:

Records Destroyed Register								
Office of _____								
Record no	Date of deposit	Deposited by	Category	Subject	Indicative date of destruction	Actual date of destruction	Initials of Record Room Asst	Initials of Office manager

- vi. Record of confidential and secret nature will be burnt on the appointed day away from the office under the supervision of Office Manager. Other record will be shredded into pieces and sold as waste paper as soon as possible.

Duties and Responsibilities of Officers and Staff

49. Classification of officers and staff

Employees working in KFD belong to four broad categories as indicated in the table below:

	Executive	Ministerial
Officers	Executive officers Group A & B	Ministerial officers Group A & B
Staff	Executive staff Group C & D	Ministerial staff Group C & D

There are two broad cadres of employees namely executive and ministerial. Those who exercise power and authority under the relevant Acts and Rules are the Executive Cadres. Subordinates who aid and assist the Executive Cadres in the office work belong to Ministerial Cadres. State Government has classified its employees into Group A, B, C and D. Persons recruited to Group A and B posts are officers because they hold positions of authority. Persons recruited to Group C and D posts are the employees or staff. Group D employees are the lowest in the hierarchy. They are engaged in physical work according to the written or oral

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instructions of their immediate superiors. They are called as Support Staff or Sub-Staff. Group C and D employees wearing uniforms and working in the field are called as the Frontline Staff. Executive officers wield authority in the field as well as in the office. Authority of Ministerial officers is limited to office administration only. Their working is subject to superintendence by the Executive Officers. All Forest Offices in the state are headed by Forest Officers of appropriate rank. Each one of them is called as Head of the Office. He/she is the Controlling Officer for all the officers and employees working under him/her.

50. Duties and responsibilities of various officers and staff

More than forty different cadres of officers and staff work in different offices. Following is the brief description of their duties and responsibilities in so far as the office work is concerned.

A. Head of the Office: Head of the Office is the highest officer holding the charge of an office. As the Chief Officer, he/she is responsible for all its activities. He/she is authorised to conduct official business and carry out correspondence by designation. Some offices may be tiny with a few or no subordinates. Some may be more elaborate and fairly complex. Range Forest Office is the lowest and the PCCF (HoFF) is the highest Head of the Office in the department.

Following are the generic duties and responsibilities of the Head of the Office with respect to the office work:

- i. To organise the office into functional units for efficient working.
- ii. To assign duties and responsibilities equitably to all the subordinates.
- iii. To ensure that officers and employees attend to their duties promptly.
- iv. To guide the subordinates and oversee their work regularly.
- v. To implement relevant Acts, Rules and Regulations sincerely.
- vi. To ensure that available resources and facilities are used efficiently.
- vii. To keep in touch with subordinates, superiors and the public at all times.
- viii. To work according to the directions of senior officers/government.
- ix. To ensure that citizens are satisfied with the service quality.
- x. To ensure that government work is not impaired in any manner.
- xi. To uphold the moral and ethical integrity and to lead by personal example.

B. Duties and responsibilities of TA/DCO: Technical Advisor is a Forest Officer in the rank of ACF/DCF who is the second in command in the office by rank. Officers of the rank of CF

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and above shall be called as Deputy Chief of Office (DCO). Main duties and responsibilities of TA/DCO are to:

- i.** Work under the overall administrative control and direction of the Head of the Office; be a connecting link between the staff and officers working in the office.
- ii.** Be well acquainted with the office procedures, Acts, Rules, Manuals and instructions of a general nature relating to Finance, Personnel and General Administration of the department to ensure effective and purposeful control of the office. TA/DCO should be in possession of a copy of the Standing Guard Files, Acts, Rules, Manuals, Codes, Hand Books etc., ready at hand for consultation.
- iii.** Take care of the day to day functions of the office and enable the Head of the Office to find sufficient time for field works and inspections.
- iv.** Guide, monitor, review the performance and control the working of all the ministerial staff/officers in the office and be a source of guidance to them.
- v.** Ensure that the infrastructure in the office is well maintained and used fully.
- vi.** Monitor the movement of tappal, files and outward communications in the office and take steps to improve the efficiency. All office files and communications must pass through him/her invariably.
- vii.** Sign the outward communications and orders in his/her own name and designation and dispose them in accordance with the delegation of powers.
- viii.** Ensure that the progress reports and other scheduled returns are submitted on time.
- ix.** Sign salary bills and other routine office expenditure bills.
- x.** Sign the works vouchers scrutinized and found correct by the Accountant.
- xi.** Undertake field/office inspections specifically authorised by the Head of the Office.
- xii.** Assist the Head of the Office in formulation of plans, schemes and programmes and write special reports required by Head of the Office.
- xiii.** Keep essential data and information related to the office work ready at all times and provide the same on demand.
- xiv.** Dispose of urgent matters required by higher officers if the Head of the Office is away and get them ratified later.
- xv.** Prepare replies to audit paras and inspection observations if they are technical in nature.
- xvi.** Sanction casual leave to executive subordinates.

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- xvii. Forward the grievances/representations/request etc., submitted by the subordinates to higher authorities.
- xviii. Receive visitors/general public and attend to their information needs and grievances.
- xix. Prepare background papers and data for the meetings to be conducted or attended by Head of the Office.
- xx. Liaise with other departments and represent the Head of the Office in the local meetings. After the meetings, he/she should submit a brief write up of the deliberations.
- xxi. Accord technical approval for forestry works undertaken up by other departments consistent with the departmental rules and guidelines within the financial powers delegated to his/her level by the state government.

However, the TA/DCO is not entitled to exercise any powers vested in the Head of the Office by any law, rule, government order or notification. They have to be examined and decided by the Head of the Office only. The job of TA/DCO is to maintain good working relationship with the Head of the Office at all times and assist him/her in all possible and acceptable ways.

C. Duties of special officers: Some offices may have special officers drawn from other departments to look after specialised subjects like legal matters, public relations, extension activities, surveys, settlement, statistics, accounts, tourism, veterinary assistance and so on. They will discharge the specific responsibilities assigned to them and report to the Controlling Officer directly or through the TA/DCO as the case may be.

D. Duties and responsibilities of Estate Officer: Estate officer is a Range Forest Officer charged with the responsibility of maintaining the office premises and residential colonies of the department. It may be an exclusive and dedicated post in some Districts. In other places the Territorial RFO working in the same headquarters will concurrently act as the Estate Officer. While carrying out petty repairs inside their offices remain the responsibility of respective officers, Estate Officer is responsible for the overall maintenance of the office buildings and also the common facilities like roads, street lighting, water supply etc., in the campus. Where there is an exclusive Estate Officer, the Security Staff, Cleaning Staff, Lift Attenders etc., shall be placed under his/her administrative control. Following are the duties and responsibilities of the Estate Officer:

- i. Overseeing the work of support staff placed under his/her control.
- ii. Ensure that basic services like power including backup in case of tripping, lighting, water, elevators, drinking water, clean toilets, ventilation, intercom, biometric attendance system, canteen, common area lighting etc., are available and functional.

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- iii. Maintain common facilities like conference/meeting halls and their appurtenants in working condition.
- iv. Make arrangements for visitor management, vehicle parking etc.
- v. Pay taxes and tariffs connected with the property.
- vi. Undertake regular maintenance operations of all the buildings as per schedule.
- vii. Undertake petty maintenance building, roads, compound walls, garages, store room etc., to keep them in usable condition.
- viii. Make arrangements for observing national festivals and other occasions.
- ix. Ensure that life on the premises is peaceful and free from tensions.
- x. Clear the junk and keep the office free from pests.

E. Duties and responsibilities of the Office Manager/Ministerial Head: He/she is the highest grade ministerial functionary working in the Divisional offices and above. He/she may be heading a Wing/Branch/Centre/Cell or unit in the Head office. He/she is generally a Group B Officer in the rank of Gazetted Manager in Divisional/Zonal Offices, Assistant Administrative Officer in Zonal Offices; Administrative Officers in Circle Office, Administrative Officers or Chief Administrative Officers in Head Office. Small Divisional Offices may have Section Officers (Office Superintendents) as Office Managers. Office Manager is responsible for running the internal affairs of the office efficiently. His/her duties and responsibilities are to:

i. Ensure good work environment in and around the office

- a. Ensure that support staffs clean the office premises and its surroundings every day in time and keep the office ready for use.
- b. Ensure that security to the office premises, equipment, records, stores and other valuables is adequate and effective at all times.
- c. Create proper seating facilities for staff, officers and visitors.
- d. Ensure that office has proper lighting and ventilations.
- e. Indent stationery, furniture and equipment required for the office, and
- f. Hold the office keys during day and night.

ii. Allocate work to subordinates

- a. Assess the capacity of subordinates in the office and get the office work allocated by Head of the Office equitably among all the available office staff.

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- b. Record the allocation of work through an Office Order, update it from time to time and maintain it in the personal custody.
- c. Help and ensure that every staff member prepares a comprehensive Annual Action Plan and implements it without any hitch, and
- d. Suggest alternate arrangements to Head of the Office in case of long leave, training, suspension etc., of any subordinate staff.

iii. Guide the subordinates

- a. Be acquainted with the morale, conduct and discipline of the office staff.
- b. Train, advise and help the subordinate staff and ensure that they conduct the office business efficiently in accordance with the Acts, Rules and Regulations.
- c. Maintain and update the Standing Guard Files on all the subjects, keep one copy in personal custody and provide copies to TA/DCO and Head of the Office.
- d. Ensure that subordinates also maintain and update their standing Guard Files.
- e. Ensure that official business is conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations prescribed, and
- f. Ensure that subordinates keep the files, records and registers up-to-date.

iv. Maintain office discipline

- a. Maintain the list of residential addresses and contact phone numbers of the office staff, departmental officers and other important local officers.
- b. Monitor the staff attendance and report to the TA/DCO/Head of the Office by 10.15 AM daily. Take action against habitual late comers.
- c. Ensure that support staffs wear proper uniforms while on duty and discharge assigned works satisfactorily. Cut half day salary if they are not in uniforms.
- d. Regulate the movement of office staff and visitors during working hours and ensure peace and tranquillity in the office.
- e. Ensure economy in the purchase and use of stationery, equipment and other consumables like postal covers, stamps etc.
- f. Initiate the Annual Performance Reports of Group C officials in the office.
- g. Prevent disclosure of official information to unauthorised persons.
- h. Prevent sexual harassment and other oppressive practices in office, and
- i. Initiate action if anyone is found in drunken/inebriated condition, indulges in sexual harassment, mischief or misconduct while at work.

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v. Attend to tappal

- a. Ensure that tappal reaches office by 11 AM daily and see that the full tappal reaches the Head of the Office before 12 noon.
- b. Keep a watch on the smooth flow of inward/outward tappal.
- c. Go through the daily tappal quickly, make notes and observations, mark the name of the Dealing Hand and submit to TA/DCO/Head of the Office.
- d. Mark the security grading and urgency grading on in/out tappal, and
- e. Conduct weekly check of stamps account.

vi. Attend to files

- a. Check if files and note sheets comply with the relevant rules.
- b. Correct the drafts and notes made by the subordinates on the files.
- c. Brief TA/DCO/Head of the Office on complicated matters.
- d. Referencing the note sheets personally.
- e. Ensure that issues have all the attachments in place.
- f. Tappal (both incoming and outgoing) are priority marked.
- g. Ensure that files/cases are not held up at any level in the office. and

vii. Monitor important office matters

- a. Diarise all important matters and monitor their disposal closely.
- b. Take up table inspection of Dealing Hands and Desk Officers.
- c. Personally attend to intricate cases.
- d. Get the schedule of returns/reports on time from subordinate offices.
- e. Ensure timely submission of fixed date and other important cases, and
- f. See that the concerned dealing hands collect, compile and keep updated, statistical data/information relating to their subjects.

viii. Attend to audit and inspection works and court cases

- a. Maintain an Audit/Inspection Minutes Book personally. Get the details of paras dropped or added at the end of each audit/inspection.
- b. Furnish replies to audit queries in consultation with TA/DCO/Head of the Office at the time of auditing.
- c. Prepare detailed draft replies on the Audit/Inspection paras in consultation with the TA/DCO and submit to Head of Office on time after the audit report is received.

Notes: _____

- d. Follow up with the concerned offices on the replies to audit/inspection paras, provide additional information if any is needed and ensure that they are dropped.
- e. Organise audit/inspection of subordinate offices including quasi-autonomous bodies like VFCs/EDCs/Boards/Societies, and
- f. Monitor High Court and Supreme Court cases personally.

ix. Attend to record room works

- a. Ensure that closed files are properly recorded and sent to record room.
- b. Approve the recording of files and their classification.
- c. Approve issue of old records.
- d. Approve the weeding of time-barred files, and
- e. Oversee the destruction of time-barred files.

x. Deliver public services efficiently

- a. Ensure that files connected with public are not delayed.
- b. Dispose SAKALA applications in time.
- c. Receive RTI and other applications, acknowledge them, discuss the issues with TA/DCO/ Head of Office and dispose them appropriately, and
- d. Convey the information promptly to the applicants.

xi. Watch and eliminate delays

- a. Review monthly statement of pending cases and take action for quick disposal of pending cases. No files should be unduly delayed.
- b. Take up surprise table inspections/desk reviews in the office.
- c. Sign and issue first and second reminders to subordinate offices.
- d. Maintaining the Call Book and the files deposited for recall.
- e. Take steps for expeditious disposal of work in the office from time to time and implement them with the approval of TA/DCO/ Head of the Office, and
- f. Exercise the powers delegated to him/her for speedy disposal.

xii. Other duties

- a. Intimate assumption of charge by TA/DCO/ Head of Office to all concerned;
- b. Sign and issue formal meeting notices to subordinate offices after the dates and agenda are approved by Head of Office.

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- c. Handle important telephone calls in the absence of TA/DCO/ Head of Office.
- d. Sign and issue true copies of office documents.
- e. Discharge the duties of TA also if there is no TA/DCO post.
- f. Handle the confidential and secret papers/files entrusted to him/her, and
- g. Compile and submit the Annual Report and Annual Administration Report.

Overall, the Office Manager is incharge of holistically supervising the cleanliness of the office premises, overseeing the activities of the office staff, ensuring effective disposal of matters and keeping the Controlling Officer updated. Office Manager's role in checking delays and ensuring efficiency is crucial. He/she is jointly responsible along with the Dealing Hand for any delays and inefficiency in the office work. His/her work is subject to control, guidance and superintendence by the TA and Head of the Office.

F. Duties and responsibilities of the Section Officer: Each office from Divisional Offices and above are organised into sections for convenient handling and disposal of office work. Each section is headed by an officer who is lower in grade and reports to the Office Manager. Generally Superintendents may function as Section Officers in Divisional and Zonal offices. Gazetted Managers may act as Section Officers in Circle Offices. In Head Office Gazetted managers, and / Assistant Administrative Officers are expected to act as Section Officers. Duties and responsibilities of Section Officers are somewhat similar to the Office Manager described above but limited to the section he/she is supervising. Since the scale of operations is limited, he/she can do some original work particularly on complicated ones. He/she should be more efficient in disposal and more thorough with facts and figures. Following are the duties and responsibilities of Section Officers:

i. General duties

- a. Distribution of work among the staff as evenly as possible.
- b. Training, helping and advising the staff.
- c. Management and coordination of the work.
- d. Maintenance of order and discipline in the section, and
- e. Maintenance of a list of residential addresses and contact phone numbers of the staff.

ii. Responsibilities relating to tappal

- a. Go through the receipts.
- b. Submit receipts which should be seen by higher ups at the tappal stage.
- c. Keep a watch on any hold-up in the movement of tappal, and

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- d. Scrutinize the section diary once a week to ensure that it is being properly maintained.

iii. Responsibilities relating to issue of draft

- a. See that all corrections have been made in the draft before it is marked for issue;
- b. Indicate whether a clean copy of the draft is necessary;
- c. Indicate the number of spare copies required;
- d. Check whether all enclosures are attached;
- e. Indicate priority marking.
- f. Indicate mode of despatch;
- g. See that the telephone number, fax number and e-mail address of the signing authority have been indicated below the signature.

iv. Responsibility of efficient and expeditious disposal of work and checks on delay

- a. Keep note of important receipts with a view to watching the progress of action.
- b. Ensure timely submission of periodical returns and statements.
- c. Undertake inspection of dealing hands' table to ensure that no paper or file has been overlooked.
- d. Ensure that cases are not held up at any stage, and
- e. Go through the list of periodical returns every week and take suitable action on items requiring attention during next week.

v. Independent disposal of cases

- a. Issuing acknowledgements, reminders and other routine communications.
- b. Obtaining or supplying factual/statistical information of a non-classified nature, and
- c. Any other action which a Section Officer is authorized to take independently.

vi. Duties in respect of recording and indexing:

- a. Approve the recording of files and their classification.
- b. Review the recorded files before weeding.
- c. Order and supervise periodic weeding of unwanted spare copies.
- d. Ensuring proper maintenance of registers required to be maintained in the section.

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- e. Ensuring proper maintenance of reference books, folders of office-orders etc. and keep them up-to-date.
- f. Ensuring neatness and tidiness in the Section.
- g. Dealing with important and complicated cases personally, and
- h. Ensuring strict compliance with Departmental Security Instructions.

G. Duties and responsibilities of Desk Officers: Duties of Desk Officers are a combination of Dealing Hand and the Section Officer. In the Desk Officer System, the work of a department at the lowest level is organized into distinct functional desks each manned by a senior Desk Functionary of appropriate rank. The rank could be from Superintendent to Assistant Administrative Officer. Sometimes technical personnel like RFOs can also discharge the duties of desk officer. Desk Officer System is intended to reduce the number of levels at which papers are being dealt, speed up the process of office work and optimizing the quality as well as the quantity of work performed by him. Desk officer will himself/herself initiate action on as many receipts as possible, keeping in view the priority requirements. Desk Officer's role encompasses the following:

- i. Receiving tappal and docketing them to the relevant file.
- ii. Seeking and getting any additional information from the subordinate offices.
- iii. Examining the receipts thoroughly.
- iv. Maintaining the required guard files for referencing.
- v. Consulting the relevant Acts, Rules, Regulations etc., and preparing the file noting.
- vi. Consult the higher up independently in respect of non-routine matters and receive instructions on disposal.
- vii. Self-typing of notes, information onto the standard process sheets, letters, etc.
- viii. Referencing the notings and files.
- ix. Drafting suitable replies and issuing in simple situations.
- x. Signing and issuing the draft as per the delegation of powers.
- xi. Getting the draft in other cases approved by the higher authorities.
- xii. Signing the communications in his/her own capacity by appending the words "I am directed to convey", and issuing them.
- xiii. Filing of office copies of the issues and file management.
- xiv. Maintaining call book.

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- xv. Maintain a copy of the statement of periodical returns and reports and submit them accordingly.
- xvi. Pursuing pending matters with subordinate offices independently.
- xvii. Participate in office inspection works.
- xviii. Carry confidential and secret files and assist the officers during meetings, and
- xix. Maintain an independent archive of data relevant to the functions of the desk, and
- xx. Send the closed records to record room.

H. Duties and responsibilities of Dealing Hands: Generally SDAs and FDAs rarely and Section Officers work as Dealing Hands. Following criteria must be used for determining the grade of Dealing Hand:

1. Second Division Assistants for very basic, routine and repetitive jobs which do not required any background referencing or critical thinking. Not much intellectual input is required for processing the papers or files each time. E.g. Handling of tappal, maintenance of record room, preparing salary bills, scrutinising and consolidating regular statements/returns, routine files processed based on standard check lists, handling books & maps etc.
2. FDAs shall be deployed in posts where rules have to be applied without much interpretation or in posts where some degree of arithmetic, handling of cash or stores/stocks is involved. Familiarity with relevant rules and regulations is necessary. E.g. Budget, accounts, sales, stores, forest offence cases, vehicles etc.
3. Section Officers shall be posted as Dealing Hands if the subjects are interlinked with other subjects and interpretation of rules and regulations are involved in processing the papers/files. E.g. Establishment matters, departmental enquiries, recruitment, forest contracts/leases, court cases, Audit/inspections, JFM, forest rights, land matters etc.
4. If the nature of work assigned to any Dealing Hand is substantively technical (being connected with forestry field works, use of space technology, ICT, forest surveys, planning, research, evaluation, training etc), SDAs may be substituted by Forest Guards and FDAs and Section Officers may be substituted by DRFOs.
5. In respect of Range and Sub-Divisional Offices, ministerial staff may be substituted with executive staff. They will discharge the work in the same manner as the ministerial staff. Guidance required shall be provided by the ministerial staff in the Divisional Offices.

Actual work of each Dealing Hand depends upon the subjects assigned to the desk. There

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may be a variety of Dealing Hands in different offices depending upon the nature of official transactions. Some functions like establishment, budget, accounts, stores etc., may be common to all offices. But their job content may not be common. Because of such divergence, it is not possible to list various types of desks in different offices in the state comprehensively and describe their duties and responsibilities. The number of desks in each office and the actual work allocation to each one of them should be done through an Office Order by the respective Heads of Offices. When the subjects are allocated, records as specified for the subject matter in the Forest Acts, Rules, Manuals, Codes, Handbooks and other government statutes should be maintained by the respective Dealing Hands. They must be familiar with MS Word, Excel, Nudi and other software which are commonly used in the offices. They must carry out all the office work on the computer and make use of the ICT for speedy disposal. They will not be given the assistance of a typist or data entry operator for routine work. Stated below are the common duties and responsibilities of any Dealing Hand:

i. Common Registers to be maintained:

- a. Receipts Register,
- b. Reminder Diary,
- c. Register of files,
- d. Register of files deposited in the record room, and
- e. Register of Periodicals and Returns

ii. Common files to be maintained:

- a. Standing Guard File relevant to the subjects allocated,
- b. Annual program of office works,
- c. Case files for each case,
- d. Group files for each category,
- e. Monthly list of pending cases,
- f. Weekly list of tappals received and disposed and
- g. Stationary received and consumed.

iii. Common works to be attended:

- a. Receiving tappal and e-mails and attending to them.
- b. Moving the letters and files on LMS/FMS.
- c. Putting up an office note and simple draft replies.

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- d. Drafting, typing, comparing, photocopying, scanning, e-mailing, delivering outward communications to despatch, docketing etc., without any assistance.
- e. Maintaining soft copies of files and folders on the desk top computer.
- f. Scanning the folder and files and deleting time barred files once a month.
- g. Keeping a backup copy of work done on all important cases and updating the backup also once a month.
- h. Keeping files, registers and papers in tidy condition
 - i. Assisting the Supervisor in whatever manner he/she may desire.
 - j. Promptly disposing the matters in accordance with the time limits and urgency grading.
 - k. Keeping updated statistics related to the desk.

Dealing Hands must maintain a record of the work they have turned out daily in terms of the number of incoming receipts, list of important files put up to higher officers for processing, number of issues, number of compilations done, meetings if any attended, other offices visited and so on. The ICT Centre may develop application software to update such details which can account how the time of the Dealing Hand has been spent. At the end of the month, a printout of the work turned out must be submitted to the controlling officer through the supervisor. Till this application is ready for use, details can be recorded in an ordinary note book and report submitted.

I. Duties and responsibilities of personal staff

Personal staff aid and assist officers in their day to day work. They have to do a variety of official and personal chores to enable the officers to find sufficient time to attend to important official business. Personal staff must gain the confidence of the officer. They should not divulge any official or personal information to anyone. They must possess sufficient skills in human relations and work to maintain cordial relations with all the officers, staff and visitors. They must be proficient in English and Kannada shorthand and typing. Their duties and responsibilities include:

- i. Putting up proper name boards of officers and getting their visiting cards/letter heads and other personal stationery printed.
- ii. Procuring consumable items like napkins, towels, soaps, coffee cups/mugs, serving tray and other items for use in the office chambers.
- iii. Taking dictations, transcribing the text and providing clean copies.
- iv. Attending to telephone calls.
- v. Fixing appointments and maintaining the engagements diary.

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- vi. Handling visitors.
- vii. Placing the clippings from the daily newspapers before the officer and informing him/her of electronic media information relevant to the official work.
- viii. Sending/receiving fax, SMS, wireless or personal messages or post.
- ix. Scanning and emailing important/urgent communications to the recipients.
- x. Maintaining Reminder Diary for the officer and updating him/her from time to time.
- xi. Making arrangements for tour/travel/night halts etc.
- xii. Making arrangements for meetings, organising stationery, lighting, refreshments etc.
- xiii. Maintaining contact list, essential data, information and reference documents.
- xiv. Keeping the reference books and documents ready.
- xv. Taking care of personal transactions and correspondence.
- xvi. Monitoring the movement of important papers, files etc.
- xvii. Control over drivers and vehicles attached to the officer.
- xviii. Getting the signature of the officer on urgent correspondence.
- xix. Preserve important documents entrusted to his/her custody, and
- xx. Generally assisting the officer in such a manner as he/she may require including handling of confidential matters.

J. Duties and responsibilities of Receipts and Issues sections: Following are the duties and responsibilities of Receipts and Despatch staff:

- i. In Range and Sub-Divisional offices, both incoming and outgoing tappal will be handled by the Office Assistant along with other office work.
- ii. In Divisional, Zonal and Circle Offices, there shall be a Receipts and Despatch Desk which will attend to both receipts and despatch of mail.
- iii. In the Head Office, there shall be a Receipts and Despatch Section under a Section Officer who with the support of a few assistants will handle both incoming and outgoing mail on behalf of all the constituent offices.
- iv. Local tappal shall be got delivered through the delivery boys under acknowledgement.
- v. They shall make arrangements for despatching late but urgent communications by courier service.
- vi. As far as possible, tappal should be received and despatched every day and nothing should be left with the section.

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- vii. They shall procure and keep sufficient stock of service and general postage stamps.
- viii. Staff responsible for receipts and despatch shall get sufficient number of envelopes prepared and kept ready for use from partly used stationery in the office.
- ix. They shall keep the stamps account up-to-date, reconcile the stamp account weekly, and close the account monthly and report the status to Office Manager.

K. Duties and responsibilities of Record Room Staff

- i. Receive recorded files from the Dealing Hands/sections for preservation and issue acknowledgement.
- ii. Properly arrange the files in the mobile rack compactor.
- iii. Issue records on demand, get them back in time and restore them to their place.
- iv. Make arrangements for proper up-keep and preservation of the records, and
- v. Weed out and destroy time-barred files as per the guidelines.

L. Duties and responsibilities of Control Room Staff:

- i. Keep basic information about the department, schemes, programs and common issues ready at hand all the time.
- ii. Keep the contact information of officers/staff concerned.
- iii. Receive and record incoming messages 24x7.
- iv. Enter the messages in the appropriate registers.
- v. Respond to the informant/caller with the available information.
- vi. Communicate the messages received on priority basis to the officers concerned, whether they are in the field or in the local office.
- vii. Inform the action taken to the informant based on the feedback received from the office within 24 hours.
- viii. Compile a weekly and monthly statement of messages received and submit to office.

M. Duties and responsibilities of group D employees: Group D employees reflect the culture of the organisation/department. It is therefore extremely important to watch and regulate their conduct. The following code of conduct shall be observed by all Groups D employees:

- a. Always wear the prescribed uniforms while on duty.
- b. Attend to office half an hour before the prescribed opening hour in the morning and

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leave only after all the staff and officers have left and security staff have taken charge of the office.

- c. No drinking, smoking, chewing of paan, gutka or any other tobacco products.
- d. Behave politely and respectfully with officers, staff and general public.
- e. Don't accept any freebie from any public.
- f. Don't engage with visitors and general public in conversations.
- g. Don't divulge any information to unconnected persons.
- h. Not allow access to any records or documents to unauthorised persons.
 - i. Take due care of Government property at all times.
 - j. Should not abstain from duty without prior permission.
- k. Work with the officer/staff to whom they are attached.
 - l. Should work over time when the business of office so requires.

Office Manager will assign the duties on rotation. They shall work accordingly. No one should be allowed on the same duty for more than three years. Following are their duties and responsibilities:

- i. Get the office/rooms opened in the morning by the watchman and clean the premises in the presence of security staff. Office and its surrounding should be kept tidy, free from dust and fit for use during working hours.
- ii. Dispose the waste/garbage safely.
- iii. Clean and dust books, files, papers, stores, record room etc.
- iv. Keep the napkins, towel and other personal items of the officer clean.
- v. Arrange books, files, stationary, equipment etc., as directed
- vi. Supply clean drinking water to officers and staff.
- vii. Fetch the officer's bag from the vehicle to chamber and deliver it back.
- viii. Attend to the officers when calling bell is given.
- ix. Attend to telephone calls if no one else is picking them.
- x. Fetch and serve snacks/beverages/lunch etc, serve if needed, clean the cups/saucers and place them in the cupboards.
- xi. Fetch and serve lunch, clean up the plates and place.
- xii. Carry office files from one desk to another as ordered.

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- xiii. Distribute tappal, files and other articles to the staff concerned.
- xiv. Do photocopying.
- xv. Fetch books from library and return them after use.
- xvi. Deliver messages and local tappal.
- xvii. Visit treasury, submit bills and get the cheques.
- xviii. Carry and deliver the tappal to the officer at home or to the camp.
- xix. Manufacture despatch covers and assist the R & I section in despatch.
- xx. Assist in recording of closed files, delivering them to the record room and bring back when necessary.
- xxi. Load, unload, carry, rearrange furniture, stationery, computers etc., as directed.
- xxii. Accompany the officers/staff on tour if necessary.
- xxiii. In the evening leave office only after all the electrical gadgets have been switched off and the rooms/office are locked by the security staff.
- xxiv. Perform such other duties as may be instructed.

All these duties are not done by one person. It is the collective responsibility of all the Group D staff working in the office.

N. Duties and responsibilities of security staff

- i. Prevent entry of unauthorized person on holidays, and before and after office hours.
- ii. Take adequate precautions to prevent fire, theft or damage to government property.
- iii. Open the office premises by 8 AM in the morning and oversee the cleaning of office by support staff.
- iv. In the evening lock the office after all the officers and staff have left and all electrical gadgets are switched off.
- v. During the working hours direct outsiders and visitors to the reception.
- vi. Do not to allow unauthorised movement of goods in or out of the office.
- vii. Check and see that on one other than officers, R&I section and authorised messengers are carrying any official record, stationery, store or stock-articles except on specific written directions of the Office Manager.
- viii. Ensure orderly parking of vehicles and ensure that they are not fiddled by unauthorised persons.

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- ix. Report if any valuable is damaged or found lost any time.
- x. During the duty period, security staff shall be vigilant, be on the allotted duty spot throughout, observe and enquire about any unauthorised persons found in and around the office. They shall not leave the place unattended while taking coffee break or going for lunch/dinner. Someone else should be asked to keep a watch and return quickly to duty.
- xi. Don't allow staff to work on general holidays unless specifically permitted by the Office Manager. On such occasions, they should open the room which is permitted to be used and not the whole office. It should be locked immediately after the person leaves.
- xii. They shall attend to any other official duties entrusted by the Head of the Office.

O. Duties and responsibilities of Jamedar

His/her duties are similar to that of Group D employees. Being senior person, he/she will work only with the officer to whom they are attached and not move away. His/her work will revolve around the officer. He/she will also accompany the officer on tours.

P. Duties and responsibilities of sweepers

- i. Sweep, clean and mop the rooms, corridors, verandas and office surroundings half an hour before the scheduled opening time of the office.
- ii. Dust the officers' rooms daily and other places weekly or as often as directed.
- iii. Collect and dispose the garbage safely and burn if necessary under supervision.
- iv. Attend to any other work in the office such as shifting and arranging of furniture and other articles either in the office.

Q. Duties and responsibilities of Cleaners

- i. Scavengers should wash and clean all the lavatories, urinals, bathrooms, water closets, wash basin etc., with phenyl daily and keep them free from odour. Cleaning should be completed half an hour before office starts.
- ii. Common toilets should be cleaned in the afternoon once again if necessary.
- iii. Room fresheners should be hung in the officers toilets. They should be replaced once in a month.
- iv. Faucet, mirrors, taps, buckets, mugs, handles, floor mats etc., shall be cleaned once a week.
- v. They shall attend to any other work entrusted to them by the OM/TA/Controlling officer.

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R. Duties and responsibilities of Lift Attenders

- i. They should attend to duties half an hour early in the morning and leave after everyone in the office except the Security Staff have left.
- ii. As soon as they come to work in the morning, Lift Attenders shall collect the keys of their respective lifts from the estate/security officer after noting the time in the Attendance Registers and return the keys in the same way in the evening.
- iii. Lifts should be cleaned and kept tidy every day twice.
- iv. Normally Lift shall not be permitted to be used by the passengers for the first 2 floors. However, it will be allowed for disabled persons and the aged.
- v. Lift attenders shall behave courteously and politely with passengers.
- vi. Lifts shall be fitted with emergency landing devices for safe landing at the nearest lower floor in case of power trips.
- vii. Lifts shall be serviced regularly as per the annual maintenance contract. If there is any problem with the maintenance, it should be brought to the notice of estate officer. Maintenance details shall be entered in a permanent register.
- viii. They shall attend to the office early or leave late if the officers are working.
- ix. They shall attend to duty on holidays if specifically instructed.

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Appendix

List of registers to be maintained in the offices

Sl no	Name of the register	Section	Page
1	Attendance Register	10 A i	
2	Inspection and Audit Minutes Book	43 I	
3	Call Book	41 K	
4	Complaints and Petitions Register	15 E i	
5	Confidential Cases Register	40 B	
6	Casual Leave Register	10 A vii	
7	Desk Diary	27 H	
8	Despatch Register	28 iv	
9	eMails Register	25 v	
10	File Movement Register	39 A	
11	Furniture and Fixtures Register	6	
12	Library Accession Register	12 F	
13	Library Issue Register	12 G	
14	Local Delivery Register	28 x	
15	Movement Register	10 A iv	
16	Receipts Register	27 B ii	
17	Records Destroyed Register	48 G v	
18	Records Issued Register	46 D iv	
19	Records Received Register	48 D ii	
20	Files Register	37 vii	
21	Reminder Diary	37 xv	
22	Secret Cases Register	40 B	
23	Vehicle Log Book	19 B i	
24	Visitors' Register	14 E	
25	Wireless Messages Register	26	

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