



County of Yolo

Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual

TITLE: E-MAIL POLICY	DEPARTMENT: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
TYPE: POLICY	DATE: MAY 16, 2000

A. INTRODUCTION

Electronic mail (e-mail) has become the de facto standard of communication. Yet, like all powerful tools, it has the ability to damage as well as to assist. This policy is necessary to promote constructive, responsible and appropriate use of e-mail. It defines permissible and prohibited use and cites examples. It states the County's right to access and disclose the contents of electronic communications, but also sets forth the requirements for prior approval of such access and confidentiality.

This policy is a general County policy. It does not preclude any County department from establishing a more restrictive policy based on factual circumstances that exist in that department determined by the Department head.

B. POLICY

1. Permissible Uses

- a. The use of any County resources for electronic communications should be related to County business.
- b. Authorized Persons - Only County staff and other authorized persons conducting County business may use the electronic communication systems.
- c. Personal Use - The County acknowledges that incidental personal use can and will occur. This is considered an acceptable use provided that such use does not cause a direct cost to the County or significantly hinders productivity in the workplace. (An example of a use that does not create a direct cost is receiving an e-mail from a friend. An example of a use that does create a direct cost is receiving an electronic book from a friend that involves printing, thus creating a direct cost.)

2. Prohibited Uses

- a. Commercial Purposes - County resources for electronic communication shall not be used for personal commercial purposes.
- b. Sending copies of documents in violation of copyright laws.
- c. Sending messages, access to which is restricted by laws or regulations.
- d. Capturing and opening of undeliverable electronic communication except as required in order for authorized employees to diagnose and correct delivery problems.
- e. Intimidating others or interfering with the ability of others to conduct County business.
- f. "Spoofing," i.e., constructing electronic communication so it appears to be from someone else.

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- g. "Snooping," i.e., obtaining access to the files or communications of others for the purpose of satisfying idle curiosity or otherwise without a substantial County business purpose.
 - h. "Spamming," i.e., sending mass mailings not directly related to County business.
 - i. Unauthorized access or attempting to breach any security measures on any electronic communication system, or attempting to intercept any electronic communication transmissions without proper authorization.
 - j. Forwarding chain letters.
 - k. Forwarding virus alerts and/or warnings (many of these are hoaxes and should be sent to the Helpdesk for validation and dissemination).
 - l. Sending or forwarding attachments not related to County business.
3. County Access and Disclosure
- a. Grounds Required for Access - The County reserves the right to access and disclose the contents of staff and other authorized users' electronic communications, but will do so only when there is a legitimate business need and only with explicit authorization from the County Administrative Office in conjunction with County Counsel.
 - b. Monitoring of Messages - The County will not monitor electronic messages as a routine matter. It will do so only in the course of an investigation triggered by suspicions of misconduct or in response to legal processes to fulfill County obligations.
 - c. Messages sent or received by an authorized user in the course and scope of his or her duties for the County, and which are protected by privileges and confidentiality guaranteed by the Constitution and other laws of the United States and the State of California, are considered "confidential information" under this Policy. All County officers, agents and employees, including but not limited to the Information Technology Division, its staff and all other persons who undertake monitoring activities or otherwise monitor, intercept or receive messages on this system, shall respect the privileges and confidentiality that apply to such confidential information. In the event that any message containing such confidential information is monitored, intercepted or received by any person other than the intended recipient, that person or persons shall be "agents" of the office from which the intercepted originated or was directed, being subject to all ethical and legal restrictions such agency entails. In the event that any reports are generated as a result of messages being intercepted by any of the aforementioned parties, a detailed report concerning such information may only be communicated to the department head of the person sending or receiving the message being intercepted. Any other report generated concerning such monitored message shall be general in nature and not name either sender or recipient, nor refer to the content, or disclose the content of the message.

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4. Disciplinary Action

Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against individuals found to have engaged in prohibited use of the County's electronic communications systems.

5. Privacy

It should not be assumed that e-mail will always remain private. E-mail can readily become public information. E-mail messages should be considered to be potentially public, not private, information. In some circumstances, e-mail may be considered to be a "public record" subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act unless there is a specific law preventing disclosure. Anyone receiving your mail could forward it to someone else. E-mail should not be used for extremely confidential or sensitive communications. Always use professional, courteous language when representing the County.

Anyone receiving an official request for e-mail shall notify County Counsel immediately for direction.

However, nothing in this policy is intended to or shall have the effect of limiting or otherwise affecting the privileges and confidentiality of confidential information as set forth above. To the extent that any such information sent or received over this system is privileged or confidential pursuant to any such law such information shall remain privileged and confidential to the full extent provided by law.

6. Internet Mail Attachments

All e-mail attachments can contain hazards. Always use caution; do not open attachments unless the sender is known and trusted. Otherwise, forward the E-Mail and attachment to the Helpdesk for inspection.

7. Storage and Backup

E-mail storage is limited to 10 megabytes per user. Notification will be sent out each month to all users that exceed this limit. Notification will be sent to the appropriate department head for any user that exceeds this limit for two consecutive months and the account will temporarily be disabled until such time that the mailbox size is reduced by the user. The user is responsible for maintaining the mailbox(es). Delete or archive files frequently. Contact the Helpdesk with questions regarding archiving.

8. Employee Departure

When an employee leaves County service, the department must notify the Information Technology Division immediately. The e-mail account will be assigned to the departing employee's supervisor for action and will be deleted from the system thirty days after the employee's departure date.